"I said you were a traitor, and as a traitor you shall die"

THE WORKS OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

IN THIRTY VOLUMES

THE SON OF MONTE CRISTO

VOLUME ONE

ILLUSTRATED WITH A FRONTISPIECE
IN PHOTOGRAVURE

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THE SON OF MONTE-CRISTO

CHAPTER I

A MARRIAGE CONTRACT AND ITS END

IN THE month of July of the year 1829, a man created a great sensation in Paris, and even attracted the attention of the lions of society. Where he came from—who he was—what was his past life—none knew; and the mystery surrounding him only tended to make the hero of the season more interesting.

The Count of Monte-Cristo, from Italy—from Malta—no one knew whence—had unlimited credit with the banking house of Danglars, one of the largest in Paris; owned the finest mansion—a superb villa—at Auteuil, and the handsomest turnout on the road, which he presented to a banker's wife, without letting any one know his reason for doing so; all this was sufficient to make him the central point around which revolved the social gossip of the day. But, besides this, the handsome stranger makes his appearance at the theatres in the company of a lady in Grecian dress, whose transcendent beauty and countless diamonds awake alike admiration and cupidity. Like moths around the flame, society flutters about the legendary count, and it is principally the golden youth who find in him their centre of attrac-

tion. Among the latter were more especially Albert Morcerf, the son of a general, Debray, a young and talented attaché at the Foreign Office, Beauchamp, and Chateau-Renaud, who served as the asteroids of the new star in the Parisian sky.

Sometimes they were joined at those famous dinners which only a Monte-Cristo understood how to give, by a Count Andrea Cavalcanti, who at first appeared there with his father, Major Cavalcanti. Although he was a stranger, he was received in society through his acquaintance with Monte-Cristo and with Baron Danglars, in whose banking house he had a large sum on deposit.

The young count, a perfect Apollo, with classically-cut features, did not fail to produce an impression upon Eugenie, a proud, black-eyed brunette, the only daughter of the millionnaire Danglars; and as the millions of the father, in conjunction with the peculiar beauty of the daughter, began to interest the count, it was not long before they thought of marriage. Danglars, who had been a heavy loser in certain speculations of which the public was ignorant, hoped to rehabilitate himself with the millions of his prospective son-in-law, and therefore there was nothing to prevent the marriage of the proud Eugenie and the handsome Andrea.

One July evening, representatives of the high financial society, and a few members of the aristocracy, were invited to Danglars' house to witness the signing of the marriage contract of the only daughter of the house with the Italian, Count Andrea Cavalcanti, of the princely house of Cavalcanti. At five o'clock, when the guests arrived, they found all the rooms in the mansion brilliant with wax-lights.

The bride was simply yet tastefully attired: a white satin dress trimmed with lace of the same color; a single white rose, which was half hidden in her raven black hair, formed the only ornament of the young lady, whose jewels, it was well known, represented a fortune. The young count was surrounded by representatives of the gilded youth, who give the tone in the Jockey Club, and are the recognized authorities for all Europe in questions of taste, fashion, and sport.

Baron Danglars was the centre of a group of bankers, to whom he developed his celebrated projects which had increased his millions, taking good care, however, not to mention his losses. Madame Danglars, the handsome mother of the pretty Eugenie, was surrounded by a circle of young and old cavaliers, who paid court to her with the greatest ceremony, and whose adorations were accepted by the lady as a tribute due her, although it could not be denied that she favored the young attaché Debray.

The lawyers were already there, yet the ceremony appeared to be purposely delayed, as if they were waiting for the arrival of a missing guest. And this was indeed the case.

When the footman announced the Count of Monte-Cristo a stir was created among the guests. The star of the evening was overwhelmed with questions, which he paid no attention to, but quietly busied himself with the three representatives of the Danglars family.

The way he observed the young Count Cavalcanti was very strange, though very few noticed it, as the Count of Monte-Cristo was relating a robbery which had been committed in his house, in which one of the thieves

had been murdered, most probably by his own comrade. No one noticed the pallor of Count Cavalcanti, as they were too much interested in Monte-Cristo's story. When he had finished, the ceremony was proceeded with.

The marriage contract between Mademoiselle Eugenie and Count Andrea Cavalcanti was read, the millions mentioned therein causing a sensation even among the cream of the financial and aristocratic world, and the signing of the paper was next in order. This circumstance recalled to Madame Danglars the absence of a friend of the house, the procureur du roi Villefort, and she asked Monte-Cristo whether he knew where he was.

"I am indirectly the cause of the absence of the procureur du roi," said the count, as if to apologize. "The man who was murdered in my house was recognized as a former galley-slave named Caderousse, and a letter was found in his pocket which bore a remarkable address."

Every one crowded around the count, while the young bridegroom slowly walked toward a neighboring room.

"Could you tell us the address?" asked Madame Danglars.

"Certainly," replied the count. "You will all laugh over it. It was none other than that of the hero of our reunion to-night—Count Andrea Cavalcanti."

The surprised guests turned around as if to exact an explanation from the latter. He had, however, already left the room. The servants were searching all over the house for him, when a new commotion was heard.

The dazed servants returned from their search, and behind them appeared a detective accompanied by several policemen.

"I am looking for a man named Andrea Cavalcanti,"

said the detective, in the well-known monotonous way which never fails to make an impression even upon those who are not principals.

"By what right?" asked Danglars, who could not suppress his uneasiness.

"Andrea Cavalcanti is charged with having murdered the galley-slave Caderousse, with whom he was formerly chained in the galleys."

Like lightning from a clear sky this announcement fell upon the aristocratic assembly. Madame Danglars fainted, the policemen searched the house, but could not find the culprit, the guests ran here and there like a flock of sheep surprised by a fox, the servants stood motionless with dazed faces, consternation and confusion reigned supreme.

CHAPTER II

A CALM BRIDE

NO ONE among all the company in Danglars' house possessed their self-possession so much as just the one who was the least expected to do so.

Two days after the catastrophe, when Eugenie's most intimate friend, the music teacher, Louise d'Armilly, came to condole with her, the proud daughter of the banker repulsed her with a disdainful laugh.

"I am not made for marriage," she said; "at first I was engaged to Monsieur de Morcerf, whose father shot himself a few days ago, in a fit of remorse at having acquired his wealth by dishonorable means; then I was to be married to Prince Cavalcanti, to add to the millions which my father possesses, or which he perhaps does not call his own, the imaginary wealth of a—jail-bird."

"What should be done now?" asked her modest friend in an anxious tone.

"Fate shows my path," answered Eugenie, firmly. "I am not intended to become the slave of a hypocritical and egotistical man. You are aware that my inclination pushes me toward the stage, where my voice, my beauty, and my independent spirit will assure me success. The time has now arrived when I must decide:

here, the scandal and contempt of the crowd; there, applause, fame, and honor. I foresaw it all, though I did not think it would come in such a shameful way. I have fifty thousand francs pin-money, and my jewels are worth as much more. Order a carriage; I have passports for both of us; in an hour we depart for Belgium."

Louise listened to her friend speechless with astonishment; although she knew the firmness of her character, she was not prepared for so much independence.

"But we two girls alone," she hesitatingly said, "cannot—"

"I have looked out for that, too," replied Eugenie, calmly; "the passport is made out in the name of Monsieur Leon d'Armilly and sister; while you go for the carriage I will pack the trunks, and change myself into Monsieur Leon d'Armilly."

Louise mechanically left the room to order the carriage to come to Danglars' house. When she came back an elegant young man stood near the trunks, whom no one would have recognized at the first glance as the proud and courted beauty, Eugenie Danglars. With great difficulty the two girls carried the trunk through a side door of the house and deposited it at the next street corner. There the coachman awaited them, and in a quarter of an hour they had left Paris.

Let us now return to Prince Cavalcanti, *alias* Benedetto, the hero of the interrupted party at the banker Danglars' house.

With that cunning peculiar to criminals who scent danger from afar, he had made his exit at the right time. After he had pocketed the diamonds which

formed a part of Eugenie's *trousseau*, and which were exposed in the parlor, he scaled the window, slipped an overcoat over his dress, and made his way out of the house. In thirty minutes he reached an out-of-the-way suburb of Paris. Without losing a minute of his precious time, he took a carriage, and left the city under the pretence of having to catch a friend, who had departed for the chase on the previous day. The big tip he gave the driver spurred the latter on, and at the end of an hour Benedetto found himself at Loures, where he discharged his driver, saying that he would spend the night there.

Benedetto now formed a decisive plan. He did not remain in Loures, but went on foot to Chapelle-en-Serval, a mile distant, where he arrived covered with dirt and dust, and entered the nearest inn, telling the host that he had fallen from his horse. "If you could get me a coach or a horse, so that I could return to Compiegne, I would be very grateful to you."

The host really had a horse at his disposal, and in a quarter of an hour Benedetto, accompanied by the host's son, was on the road to Compiegne, which he reached about midnight. After he had discharged the boy at the market-place of the little city, he went to the inn called the Bell and Bottle, which he had patronized in former times, and to which he was admitted now.

After Benedetto had eaten a hearty supper, he inquired if he could get a room on the ground floor, but was forced to accept one on the first story, as the other had been taken by a young man who had just arrived with his sister.

The hunted culprit was so tired out by his exertions

that he fell into a deep sleep, and did not wake up early next morning, as he had intended, but at nine o'clock. Struck by an indescribable fear, he quickly dressed himself and peered through the window blinds. He recoiled in terror, for his first glance had fallen upon two policemen who leaned against the doors with their guns in their hands. His first thoughts were that he was followed and was lost. He quickly collected himself, suppressed his excitement, and seizing a piece of paper, scribbled these words on it with a lead pencil:

"I have no money, but do not desire to owe anything. The inclosed diamond pin will fully pay for my bill. I was ashamed to acknowledge this, and therefore left at five o'clock."

After he had attached the pin to the paper, he opened the door and crawled up the chimney with the agility of a chimney-sweep. Here, however, the difficulty was to continue his way without being perceived by any one. He therefore returned and entered another chimney, intending to wait there until all danger was over. He already began to think himself saved, when he lost his balance and crashed with a loud noise through the opening and into a room which was occupied, as was betrayed by a sudden scream.

A young man and a lady were in the room. The latter had uttered the cry, while the former pulled vigorously at the bell-rope.

"Rescue me—hide me!" were the first words the villain spoke. He was about to say more, but the words stuck in his throat, for he had recognized the young man as Eugenie Danglars.

"Andrea, the murderer!" exclaimed the two women.

"Have mercy! rescue me!" implored Benedetto.

"It is too late," replied Eugenie, "the door is being opened."

At the same moment, the policemen, followed by the whole inn staff, entered the room. Benedetto saw he was lost. He pulled out a dagger, as if he wished to attack his captors, but desisted when he saw it would be fruitless.

"Kill yourself!" exclaimed Eugenie, with the accent of a tragedy queen.

"Bah!" replied Benedetto, "it is too early yet; the whole thing is a misunderstanding, and I have friends."

With great coolness he held out his hands to the policemen, who put handcuffs on them.

"Give my regards to your father, Mademoiselle Danglars, and do not be ashamed. You are my bride, and we ought to have been man and wife to-day," said Benedetto, sarcastically, as he left the room with the policemen, leaving Eugenie exposed to the curious and contemptuous glances of the waiters.

CHAPTER III

A FAMILY TRAGEDY

THE procureur du roi, Villefort, was one of the most respected and influential men in Paris, and his reputation as district-attorney was spotless. Married the second time to a handsome and refined lady, Monsieur de Villefort spent his leisure time in the society of his wife, a grown daughter by his first marriage, named Valentine, his little son, Edouard, presented to him by his second wife, and his old father, Noirtier de Villefort, in an elegant mansion in the Faubourg St. Honore. The only grief he had was the condition of his father, who had been stricken with paralysis, which had not only robbed him of the use of his limbs, but of his speech too. The old man could only make himself understood by his beloved grandchild Valentine, and by a faithful servant named Barrois, by the rising and falling of his eyelids.

In the house of this immensely respected man, certain things had happened within a few months which attracted general attention, though no one could explain them. The parents of the deceased Madame de Villefort, who had been staying at their son-in-law's house on a visit, had died suddenly one after the other, the doctors being

unable to assign any other cause for their deaths than apoplexy. These facts would not have caused any talk, since the two persons who had died were both very old, had they not been followed almost immediately by the deaths of the old servant of Monsieur Noirtier and of Valentine, the blooming daughter of the procureur du roi, and the bride of a young officer named Morrel, under circumstances which looked very much like poisoning.

It was a terrible time for Monsieur de Villefort, who saw himself obliged, in his official capacity, to investigate his own household. After long observation, he had a terrible suspicion, which was confirmed by a hundred little things, that his own wife was the four-times murderess!

The reasons which actuated her to commit these terrible crimes were very clear. Valentine, the step-daughter, possessed a large fortune which she had inherited from her dead mother; she was the sole heiress of the grandparents who had died so suddenly; upon the death of Valentine all her wealth would revert to Monsieur de Villefort, and his sole heir would be his son.

Villefort, the husband, struggled terribly with Villefort, the district-attorney; he tried to ward off the guilt from his wife, but his efforts were fruitless. It was the same day on which the sensational case of Prince Cavalcanti, *alias* Benedetto, was before the Court of Special Sessions, and Monsieur de Villefort was forced to attend the sitting in his official capacity as district-attorney. Before he went he sent for his wife, who wished to attend the trial of a case which caused great excitement all over Paris.

Madame de Villefort came to his room fully dressed for the street, being under the impression that her husband would ask her to accompany him to the court-house. She trembled, however, when she noticed his face, which was torn by conflicting passions.

"Where do you get the poison from, madame, which you are in the habit of using?" asked the procureur du roi, in a tone of command.

Madame de Villefort turned deathly pale.

"I do not understand what you mean," she stammered.

"I mean," said the man of the law, "where do you keep the poison with which you murdered my parents-in-law, Barrois, and my daughter, Valentine?"

Stunned by this terrible charge Madame de Villefort fell to the floor; she no longer dared to deny the accusation, and was oppressed by a feeling of deep despair.

"Every crime, madame," continued the procureur du roi, "has its penalty; yours will be the scaffold. This expiation, however, would be as terrible for me as for you. Fate has left you to pay for your deeds by your own hand. You have, perhaps, still a few drops of poison left, which will save both you and me the scandal of a public hanging. I am going to the court-house, and I hope that when I return you will have expiated your crimes."

With a cry, the unhappy woman became unconscious, while Monsieur de Villefort, hardly able to collect his thoughts, left the room and rode to attend the Cavalcanti-Benedetto case.

CHAPTER IV

A PECULIAR TRIAL

ALL Paris was excited over the case of the handsome Andrea Cavalcanti, who was to descend from the heights of society into the depths of the criminal world. The lion of the day was to change himself into a common convict.

Large sums of money were paid for seats in the court-house, and long before the proceedings began every seat in the room was occupied by representatives of the most aristocratic families.

After the usual preliminaries, the judge, the jury, and the district-attorney took their places. Upon an order from the judge the policemen brought in the prisoner. Instead of a man borne down by shame, Cavalcanti showed himself to the crowd dressed in a ball suit, his face beaming with good humor.

The complaint was read without making the slightest impression upon the prisoner, who sat on his seat with the same ease and grace as he did, but a few days before, in the famous restaurant The Golden House.

"Prisoner," said the judge, "stand up and answer the questions I shall put to you. What is your full name?"

"I am very sorry," replied Andrea, without the slightest embarrassment, "that I am unable to answer the question just now; you can continue, however, and later on I will take an opportunity to give you information about the matter."

The people were dazed at the audacity of the prisoner.

"How old are you?" continued the judge.

"I was born on the night between the 27th and the 28th of September, 1807, at Auteuil, near Paris."

"What is your business?"

"I never bothered about the usual trades of the general run of people. I was first a counterfeiter, then a thief, and afterward committed my first murder."

A storm of anger ran through the assembly, even the judge and the jury could not suppress their loathing at the unheard-of cynicism of the prisoner.

"Are you going to give your name now?" asked the judge.

"I am not able to give you my own name, but I know that of my father."

"Name it, then."

"My father is a district-attorney," continued the prisoner with great calmness, glancing at Monsieur de Villefort, who turned deathly pale.

"District-attorney?" exclaimed the judge, greatly astonished. "And his name is?"

"His name is Monsieur de Villefort, and he is sitting in front of you."

"You are fooling with the court," said the judge angrily. "I warn you for the last time and command you to tell the truth."

"I am speaking the truth," replied the prisoner, "and can prove it. Listen, and then judge. I was born on the first floor of the house No. 28 Rue de la Fontaine, at Auteuil, on the night of the 27th to the 28th of September, 1807. My father, Monsieur de Villefort, told my mother I was dead, wrapped me in a napkin marked H. 15, put me in a small box and buried me alive in the garden of the house. At the same moment he received a thrust in the side with a knife held by a person who was concealed, and he sank to the ground unconscious. The man who attacked my father dug out the box which had been buried, and which he supposed contained money, and thereby saved my life. He brought me to the foundling asylum, where I was inscribed as No. 37. Three months later I was taken from the asylum by the sister-in-law of the man, who was a Corsican, and brought me to Corsica, where I was brought up, and in spite of the care of my foster-parents acquired vices which steeped me in crime."

"And who was your mother?" asked the judge.

"My mother thought I was dead; I am a child of sin; I do not know my mother and do not wish to know her."

A cry rang through the court-room at this point; a lady had fainted, and was carried out of the hall by several bystanders.

At this cry the procureur du roi arose, and showed his ghastly face to the crowd.

"How are you going to prove these astounding revelations?" asked the judge of the prisoner.

With a malicious look the latter pointed to Monsieur de Villefort.

"Father, they wish to have proofs; do you also want me to give them?"

"No, it is unnecessary; everything you have said is true. I resign my office, and desire the court to appoint my successor as procureur du roi," said Monsieur de Villefort, in a faint voice.

"What!" exclaimed the judge, "you, a man whose character is above suspicion, allow yourself to be intimidated by the crazy declarations of a criminal! Collect yourself, and crush the malicious accusations with a word."

Villefort shook his head. With trembling limbs he left the court-room a broken-down man. The crowd respectfully made way for him, the extent of his misfortune making a deep impression upon all hearts.

"The court is adjourned until further notice," said the judge. "Policemen, take your prisoner back to jail."

CHAPTER V

THE RESULT OF THE CATASTROPHE

ON THE 14th day of January, 1830, three months after the incidents related in the last chapter, Benedetto's trial was again before the Court of Special Sessions. Then, as now, life beat rapidly in Paris, one important thing followed the other, and it came about that the affair of the handsome "Prince Cavalcanti" was in danger of being tried before an audience consisting only of lawyers and policemen.

The weather was miserable. The snow fell in thick flakes, and the cold was so penetrating that it became impossible to remain long out of doors.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning when an elegant carriage stopped in front of the court-house. A gentleman stepped out, and was about to ascend the broad steps of the building, when he suddenly stood still. He clapped his monocle to his eye, and loudly exclaimed:

"Ah, Chateau-Renaud!"

"Beauchamp," came back the answer, and the two friends cordially shook hands.

"Really," said Chateau-Renaud, laughing, "I must be grateful to chance, which threw me in your way."

"What brings you here?"

"The trial of his highness Prince Benedetto de Cavalcanti, of course."

"I'm here for the same reason. I also wish to see the concluding act of the drama which has interested Paris so long. Do you think the poor devil has a chance of escaping the hangman's noose?"

"Hardly—but here we are. Why, the hall is about empty," exclaimed Beauchamp, wonderingly.

"Does that astonish you? Paris has always been ungrateful, and has long since forgotten that the Benedetto affair was once an important topic," replied Chateau-Renaud in a tone of indifference.

"Perhaps the trial has been postponed," said the journalist, and turning to a reporter of his acquaintance, he hurriedly asked: "Does Benedetto's trial take place to-day?"

"Benedetto's trial," answered the reporter, musingly: "ah, yes, now I know—the murder in Monte-Cristo's garden, and, if my memory is right, I believe the murderer pretends that he is the son of the procureur du roi, Monsieur de Villefort."

"Perfectly right; you have an enviable memory," laughingly said Beauchamp. "Well, does the trial take place?"

"Certainly, it's the third day of the case."

"Thank you. We can get some refreshments now and pass the time until the Benedetto case comes up," said Chateau-Renaud.

"If you desire to attend the trial, I will inform you when it's time," said the reporter, politely.

"You are very kind," answered Beauchamp, as he departed with his friend.

As they were leaving the corridor, Beauchamp nudged his companion lightly.

"Every one is not so ungrateful as to forget Benedetto. Debray is here too."

"Why not?" said Chateau-Renaud. "Debray has plenty of time to himself since the Ministry was overturned and carried a poor *attaché* along with it in its fall."

"Well, he rescued his millions anyway," replied Beauchamp, indifferently. "Though, come to think of it," he continued maliciously, "it is quite natural for Debray to interest himself in Benedetto—the latter was half and half his son-in-law."

"Oh, Beauchamp, you are cynical; the relationship reminds one of a morganatic marriage," Chateau-Renaud laughingly interposed.

"By the way, has anything new been found out about the Baroness Danglars?"

"H'm—they say she has disappeared."

"And her good, honest husband?"

"Is knocking about somewhere. God only knows."

"Well, I must say there is nothing like Parisian life. The house of Danglars breaks. Father and mother Danglars disappear, in consequence of which Debray is without his flame; and the daughter—is anything known of her? To my taste, she was the best of the lot."

"Mademoiselle d'Armilly undoubtedly knows where she is—they were inseparable companions. They will come to the surface again; from what I know of Mademoiselle Danglars, she has about as much talent for singing as a lioness."

"A beautiful constellation. What became of Monsieur de Villefort?"

"He is an incurable maniac, and is in Dr. d'Avigny's private asylum."

"Not a bad business for the old gentleman. The house of Villefort has had a terrible end. Madame de Villefort and her son are dead, and poor Valentine—I am not generally sentimental, but I confess the death of the young girl was a terrible shock to me."

"Beauchamp, do you believe in miracles?" asked Chateau-Renaud, suddenly.

"That depends. Why do you ask?"

"Well, one of my friends gave me his word of honor that he saw Mademoiselle Valentine in Marseilles."

"Before or after the funeral?"

"After, certainly."

"That seems rather wonderful, but one is already accustomed to look upon everything with which the Count of Monte-Cristo has any connection as something miraculous."

"Have you heard the fable that the count was a vampire?"

"Who could have said such a thing? What is old Nortier doing?"

"He has gone to the South; and the Morcerf family—"

"Well, what of them?"

"Nothing new. The father a suicide, the son in Africa, and the mother has disappeared."

"Just like Baroness Danglars."

"Yes, only with this difference, that Madame de Morcerf and her son gave their whole fortune to the poor."

"I am glad for the poor—I—"

"The Benedetto affair is now on," broke in the voice of the reporter, interrupting their conversation.

"Ah—thank you." And with this they all entered the court-room.

"Beauchamp," whispered Chateau-Renaud, pointing to a veiled lady who sat near them, "if I wasn't sure that the Baroness Dangl—"

"Hush! Do not mention any names. I think you are right, but I cannot understand why she comes in such disreputable company."

The lady spoken about, heavily veiled, held her head on her hand and awaited the beginning of the case. Her companion, a thin, yellow, dried-up old man, whose bald head in form and color recalled a ripe melon, sat as straight as a stick, and kept his eyes on the crucifix opposite him.

"Bring in the prisoner," ordered the judge.

A shudder ran through the lady, but she did not look up as Benedetto entered.

CHAPTER VI

BENEDETTO, THE MURDERER

IN THE meantime the room had become almost filled, as a death sentence would probably be given. Almost half the spectators were ladies. A murmur of curiosity ran about the room, and many who were present remembered the moment in the former sitting when the prisoner, with the air of a stage hero, let fall the weighty words: "My father is the royal district-attorney, Monsieur Villefort." Unconsciously all eyes were turned to the ministerial box, as if hoping to encounter the pale, confused face of the all-powerful judge, who had himself been judged, but only the substitute of the procureur was seen.

Benedetto now entered. Beauchamp and Chateau-Renaud could hardly restrain their astonishment, for very seldom has a man changed so much in three months. When they had seen Cavalcanti Benedetto last, he was the type of a parlor hero, and fascinated every one by his pleasing appearance; but the man who stood now before the judge was another—a broken-down man.

His curly hair had been shaved close to the skin, his eyes, which had formerly sparkled with life, were now dim. The small, finely formed hands were meekly crossed

over the breast, and even the prisoner's clothes harmonized with his general appearance.

A policeman gruffly showed him to his seat. Benedetto bowed deeply, and sat on the edge of the hard wooden bench.

The prisoner's lawyer, a celebrated advocate, bent down and whispered a few encouraging words to him. Benedetto listened attentively to them and murmured half aloud:

"May God have mercy on me."

"And the devil, too," whispered Beauchamp to Chateau-Renaud. "Benedetto has become a howling coward. It's a great pity!"

The judge beckoned to the actuary and ordered him to read the indictment. It was short and compact; it recited the murder of Caderousse, the robbery in the Count of Monte-Cristo's house, the revelations made by the prisoner with regard to M. de Villefort, the latter's confession, his insanity, and finally the suicide of his wife.

"Prisoner, stand up!" said the judge, in a soft voice, "and tell me your name."

"Benedetto," replied the former bandit in a modest, almost frightened voice.

"Are you guilty of the murder of Caderousse?"

"Judge," stammered Benedetto, "I must acknowledge my guilt." And burying his face in his hands, he tried to suppress his sobs.

"What kind of a comedy is the rascal playing?" grumbled Beauchamp.

"Hush!" replied Chateau-Renaud, "the proceedings are becoming interesting."

Benedetto answered all questions put to him without hesitation.

"I know," he said, "I am a great sinner, and bow to the justice of the people, as I do to the justice of God."

The duty of the jury was thus rendered easy, the murder was acknowledged, the antecedents of the prisoner were very bad, and the counterfeiter and murderer was as good as convicted at this stage of the proceedings.

"Call the witnesses," said the judge.

"Count of Monte-Cristo," cried the clerk.

No one answered.

"It is singular," said the judge, "that Monsieur de Monte-Cristo" (he purposely left out the title of count), "who is interested in this trial, has refused to obey the order of the court. Has he received a subpœna?"

The assistant district-attorney looked over his papers.

"The gentleman named," he said, with a malicious twirl of his lips, "has sold his property in France and has disappeared, no one knows where."

"Call the other witnesses," said the judge; "we shall attend to Monsieur de Monte-Cristo's case later on."

The other witnesses, mainly people who had come to Caderousse's assistance when he had called for help, were not slow in coming forward. Their testimony was short and precise. They confirmed the fact of Caderousse's being found with a knife in his heart.

"Have you anything to say, prisoner?" asked the judge.

"No, sir, these honest people unfortunately tell the truth," said Benedetto, meekly.

A murmur of applause ran round the room. When all was calm again the clerk exclaimed:

"Monsieur Noirtier de Villefort!"

"What!" exclaimed Beauchamp, springing up, as if electrified, "are they going to be so cruel as to make this unfortunate man testify again?"

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the judge, as if in answer to Beauchamp's question, "we have thought it necessary to call Monsieur de Villefort, although in the present state of his health there is little chance of his being able to clear up those points which are still obscure."

Deep silence reigned—the door was opened, and Monsieur de Villefort appeared on the threshold.

CHAPTER VII

A MIRACLE

THE Count of Monte-Cristo had indeed left Paris shortly after the first sitting of the Benedetto case had been so strangely interrupted. In his company was the young officer, Maximilian Morrel, who was so shocked at the death of his beloved Valentine as not to be any longer recognizable as the gay young officer who, with Chateau-Renaud, Beauchamp and Debray formed the leading cavaliers of the capital. A sympathy, which he could not account for himself, brought Morrel into a bond of friendship with the Count of Monte-Cristo, and he told him of his love for Valentine de Villefort and his grief at the sudden death of his idol.

But even Monte-Cristo's consolations brought no relief to the young man, and he resolved to put an end to his life, so as to be joined at least in death with his cherished darling.

He had already written the letter, the weapon lay on his table, when he was disturbed by an unwelcome visit from the Count of Monte-Cristo.

"What were you going to do, Maximilian?" asked Monte-Cristo, sternly.

"The one thing which is left to an unfortunate who

has been robbed of the one most dear to him on earth," the young man replied, in a tone of resignation.

"I understand you; he who has known Valentine as I have could readily excuse the abominable step you were about to take."

"And do you not approve of it?" asked the young man, in a tone of astonishment.

"That depends on circumstances; these circumstances are, however, not yet here, much as you may wonder. I make you the following proposition: If, at the end of a month, you do not declare that you regard this suicide as a crime against yourself and all those dear to you, then I will give you a powder which will put an end to your life without leaving such ugly traces as that pistol on your desk."

"If you can wake the dead, then you can help me. But this miraculous power I do not believe even you have. Nevertheless, I have never refused you a favor, and accede to your request, on condition that you promise not to make any new attempts to prevent me from carrying out my design."

"Accepted," said the count, as he stretched out his hand affectionately toward the young man, who grasped it without hesitation.

"To-day a month," he continued, "I shall await you on the island of Monte-Cristo."

With these words Monte-Cristo left his friend.

Maximilian remained true to his word. Five days before the expiration of the fateful month he went from Paris to Marseilles and embarked from there on one of the yachts belonging to the count for the little island of Monte-Cristo, which he reached on the appointed day.

Ali, the black servant of the count, met him on the wharf and conducted him to the count's apartments.

"Here I am, count, to receive the powder from your hands which will realize my hope to meet Valentine in another world."

"Nothing can induce you to give up your design then?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"Nothing, not even you," answered Morrel, firmly.

"Well, then, let it be so," said Monte-Cristo sternly, as he took a greenish, strongly smelling pastil from a box cut from an opal.

"It is hashish. Death is painless and recalls to the person taking it the most beautiful memories of his life."

Maximilian embraced his friend and swallowed the pastil.

The effect was wonderful. A delightful languor took possession of Maximilian. All the scenes of his childhood came back to him, only the form of his darling was missing. Suddenly the back part of the room appeared to open and a female form strode toward him with arms outstretched; it was the purified form of his beloved.

"Oh, how sweet is such a death," whispered Maximilian.

The figure strode nearer to him, embraced him and kissed his burning forehead.

"My poor lover," murmured a well-known voice.

"Valentine," exclaimed Maximilian, "Valentine, is it possible! I am not dreaming, you are alive! I clasp you in my arms, only to die myself!"

"I am alive, my dear friend, and bring you new life; it is no dream, we are at the realization of our hopes, we are united on earth forever."

Gradually Maximilian became conscious. He lay in the arms of his beloved Valentine and his faithful friend Monte-Cristo stood near him.

"Valentine and Maximilian," said the count solemnly, "my dear friends, from now on nothing shall separate you; I give you life back again, I now join your hands in the bonds which nothing can separate but the grave! May God bless you both as I do."

Overpowered with emotion the newly united couple sank at the feet of this curious man to thank him from the depths of their hearts. Monte-Cristo lifted Valentine tenderly from the ground and turning to her said:

"I shall leave you alone now, and go back to my apartments, where my wife, the Countess of Monte-Cristo, awaits me."

As soon as the count had gone the two lovers embraced each other again. Then the young man led the young girl to a divan, and asked her to tell him the wonderful story of her rescue and her return from the grave.

"I was," related Valentine, "as you know, very ill; but yet I hoped to become convalescent again! One night, as I lay on my bed of sickness, a door which I had never before perceived was opened. A man entered and approached my bed; I was just about to scream when I perceived that the spectre was none other than the Count of Monte-Cristo, who made signs to me to keep silent. He sat beside me and told me I was being gradually poisoned by my step-mother, and that she had already poisoned my grandparents Barrois in the same manner. He had himself given me an antidote. But the means he had were not sufficient to shield me

from all danger, and he begged me to drink a potion, which would put me in a trance for the space of three days. I took the potion which the count gave me; I lost my senses. How long I lay thus I do not know, but when I woke I found myself in a coffin in a church, and the count standing beside me. A new and powerful potion restored me to my former vitality. The count brought me to his house, where I found everything necessary to a journey. After I had rested for a few days, I rode to Marseilles with the count, and from there to this lonely island, where I have found you, my dear Maximilian."

A new embrace ended this conversation, and they both left the apartment to go in search of the count, to thank him again for his trouble.

They went to the grotto and asked Jacopo, who had brought Maximilian to the island, where the count was.

"I have a letter for both of you from my master."

"Where is the Count of Monte-Cristo?" they both asked simultaneously.

"He has just left the island with his wife and his servant, Ali. You can still see the ship over there," replied Jacopo, pointing to a small boat on which could be described three persons. It was the count, Haidee, and Ali. Maximilian quickly opened the letter, which read as follows:

"My dear Maximilian—A ship is lying at anchor for you. Jacopo will bring you to Livorno, where Monsieur Noirtier awaits his grandchild, whom he wishes to bless before you lead her to the altar. Everything you find in this grotto and my house in Paris are the wed-

ding presents of a faithful friend, whom you will never see again. My last words are: Waiting and hoping. May you both live happy and think now and then of your devoted friend,

"Edmond Dantes, Count of Monte-Cristo."

Meanwhile the count's vessel departed further and further from the island; a fresh breeze filled the sail and it disappeared from view. Valentine and Maximilian waved a cordial farewell to the travellers with their hands. Then the ship vanished from the horizon.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

MONSIEUR DE VILLEFORT was not alone—Dr. d'Avigny accompanied his patient, and whispered a word in his ear now and then.

Villefort was only a ruin now. His hanging lower lip and glassy eyes impressed the spectators and the bench sadly, and even those who were accustomed to be attacked by him in the days of his power as a district-attorney now only felt pity for the man who had fallen so low.

The judge was moved when he arose and delivered the following address to the jury:

"Gentlemen of the jury! Dr. d'Avigny, who pays the greatest care to Monsieur de Villefort, was so kind as to accompany his patient to-day. Before I subpœnaed Monsieur de Villefort I inquired of his physician whether he could attend court without injury to himself. Doctor, will you confirm this statement to the gentlemen of the jury?"

"Certainly, judge," said the old physician, deeply moved. "Monsieur de Villefort's condition is hopeless, and would not be changed in any way by his appearing in court—the apathy of my patient is beyond description."

Thereupon Dr. d'Avigny turned to his patient and led him to a chair. Deep silence reigned throughout the room. The veiled lady looked keenly at the man, before whose gaze criminals were wont to tremble, and who had now sunk lower than the wretched beings he had formerly prosecuted.

Benedetto, in great excitement, had outstretched his arms toward Monsieur de Villefort, and almost immediately after fell back again in his seat crushed and annihilated.

"Monsieur de Villefort," said the judge, "tell us—" He proceeded no further. Villefort tried to rise, and made strenuous efforts to stammer forth some words. The judge waited a short while and then continued:

"Monsieur de Villefort, are you able to answer a few questions I shall address to you?"

Villefort nodded and stammered with some difficulty: "Yes."

"Benedetto," said the judge, turning toward the prisoner, "stand up."

Benedetto obeyed the order.

"Look at Monsieur de Villefort," continued the judge, "and tell me, upon your conscience, whether you uphold the accusations made by you at a former trial of this case."

Benedetto was either, as pious souls say, "touched by compassion," or else the most accomplished hypocrite in existence. He clasped both hands to his face and murmured in a voice choked with tears:

"Pardon, father—pardon!"

"What does the man want of me?" asked Monsieur de Villefort, who was gradually recovering his voice, and

to the astonishment of the spectators was soon in possession of his speech.

"He calls you father," replied the judge, "you yourself have acknowledged him as your son."

Villefort put his hand to his forehead.

"My son? And he is alive? It is impossible—my children were killed in my house—my son is dead."

"Have you forgotten the night of the 27th and 28th of September, 1807?"

"No, I have forgotten nothing—that son I killed too."

"Yes, but he escaped death by a miracle, don't you know!"

"Ah, yes, I remember; it was no miracle; he owes his life to an attempt at assassination, and the murderer thought he was lifting up a treasure when he picked up the box containing the child."

"Then you acknowledge your son?"

Villefort laughed maliciously.

"Yes, certainly he is my son. How would he have been a counterfeiter and murderer otherwise? Oh, it is all right—the house in Auteuil, the napkin marked H; Villefort's son must become a murderer."

He stretched out his lean hand toward Benedetto and hissed ironically:

"You are my son. You have murdered already and will murder again."

"No, no," gasped Benedetto; "I have sinned terribly, but nothing on earth could make me increase my crimes! Father, I forgive you, and may God have mercy on both our souls."

A murmur of emotion ran through the room, and Benedetto, encouraged, continued in a sobbing voice:

"And you, too, my mother, whom I have never known, I forgive. If I could only have stammered your name and danced on your knee, I would never have become a criminal."

Deep sobbing was heard in the room and the veiled lady sank half unconscious in her seat. Her companion busied himself with her, and as soon as she had regained consciousness he whispered in her ear:

"Prudence—or all is lost."

"Monsieur de Villefort," said the judge solemnly, "you are discharged! Whatever your faults have been God has made you pay dear for them."

D'Avigny laid his hand on Villefort's arm and wished to take his patient with him, but the former district-attorney shook his head vigorously and said, rather sharply:

"I do not wish to go yet, I have something to say."

"Speak then, we are listening," said the judge, surprised.

"Judge and gentlemen of the jury," Villefort solemnly began, "you have heard the contrite words of the man who is unfortunately my son. Do not believe him—he lies!"

"Monsieur de Villefort," exclaimed the judge, warningly.

"Oh, let me finish," continued the ex-procureur du roi; "I am supposed to be insane, yet I see things clearer than a great many whose reason is unclouded! You believe I would have committed a sin had I killed him—you are wrong, it would have been the only good action of my life if I had freed the world of such a ras-

cal and monster. Benedetto neither regrets nor forgives. I, his father, ought to know him. He is playing a well-studied part. Gentlemen of the jury, be careful! The responsibility which weighs on you is great. When a tiger escapes from his cage, he is shot down. Take the sword of justice and let it fall on his neck—I, the father of this man, move that he be condemned to death!"

A murmur of affright ran through the room; people forgot that a maniac stood before them, and only saw the district-attorney, who, like a second Brutus, delivered over his own son to the law. Like the judgment day the words rang through the room, "I move that he be condemned to death." As soon as the echo of the words died away, Villefort arose, and leaning on D'Avigny's arm, he bowed to the judge and slowly left the court-room.

"Upon my word," whispered Beauchamp to Chateau-Renaud, "Villefort is insane."

"Did you notice that Madame Danglars was struggling with a fainting fit?" asked Chateau-Renaud.

"Ah, bah! Benedetto is a handsome youth, and Madame Danglars is not a model of virtue; who knows what relations they have had with each other?"

"Perhaps Debray might know more, he—"

"Hush! the procureur du roi is speaking. I'll wager that his speech will be less shrewd than that of the maniac."

The procureur du roi arose amid the hushed silence of the court-room, and began to speak, throwing all the blame on Monsieur de Villefort rather than on Benedetto.

"Let us not be carried away by pity" he said, "for

these unscrupulous men, who soil their judicial ermine in the lowest passions of mankind, and thereby endanger the lives and sacrifice the honor of their wives and children."

After the prisoner's counsel had summed up eloquently for his client and the judge had charged the jury, the latter went out, but returned in a short time.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon a verdict?" asked the judge.

There was intense excitement in the court-room, the spectators literally holding their breath.

"Yes," answered the foreman; "we find the prisoner guilty, with extenuating circumstances."

The spectators clapped their hands.

"Prisoner, have you anything to say?" asked the judge.

"No," replied Benedetto, in a calm, dignified manner.

"The sentence of the court is, that you be sent to the galleys for life."

No sooner had the sentence been pronounced than the man who had accompanied Madame Danglars glided toward the bar where Benedetto stood, and whispered something in his ear.

"We have kept our word, have we not?"

"Yes; but the galleys?"

"We have saved your head. More we cannot do at present. Have patience."

The court officials coming up to take the prisoner interrupted the conversation. Benedetto was placed in a coach and driven to Bicetre. He was placed in a filthy jail, and then left to himself. He had not been long there when he felt a hand touch him and a voice whisper close to his ear.

"You are in luck, comrade," said the unknown. "Some rich lady is interested in you. You don't remember me, perhaps. 'Twas I who brought you that note two months ago. I got two gold pieces for doing so."

"Who was the lady, and how did you get here?"

"I don't know who she is, but she appears to be over forty. As for me, I am a priest, and committed wrong—"

At this moment the door was opened, and a voice called:

"Benedetto! Benedetto!"

Benedetto arose, and peering through the grated cell-door saw a woman.

"What do you want?" he gruffly asked.

"I am your mother."

"My mother?"

"Yes."

"I have one favor to ask of you."

"I am willing to do anything for you."

"Are you going to stay in Paris?"

"No, I shall leave France on the 26th of February."

"And you sail from Marseilles?"

"Yes."

"Then you will be near Toulon. I know that you do not wish me to see your face or learn your secret. But if you have any love for me, come and see me there."

The poor woman yearned to embrace her son, whose hypocritical words awoke the dormant love in her bosom.

"I promise to see you before I sail on the 26th."

"Come to Toulon, then, on the 24th. And, by the way, here is a letter from one of my comrades to whom

I am under deep obligations. On your way home drop it into the letter-box."

She could not decline to do him this service. Her usual caution deserted her, and as she slipped the note in her bosom the light fell full on her face.

Benedetto recognized her at once as Madame Danglars, the wife of Baron Danglars, and the mother of the girl he was to have married. He could hardly restrain a cry of rage and astonishment.

"Good-by," he said. "Do not forget the 24th."

CHAPTER IX

THE EDITORIAL ROOMS

"WELL, my dear Chateau-Renaud, is there anything new?" asked Beauchamp of his friend, who had paid him a visit to his office.

"Bah—not much! It's the same old story in the Orient, and outside of that place nothing ever happens in the world."

"Nothing? What will you give me if I tell you something which will interest you, my dear Chateau-Renaud?"

"That depends. Who is the party?"

"Our friend, Albert de Morcerf."

"That is worth listening to: how is the poor fellow getting along?"

"Oh, splendidly! He distinguishes himself in every battle, and will one day become a famous general."

"I hope so. Do you still recollect the hard times poor Morcerf had when the first article from Yanina appeared in your paper?"

"I do. I went myself on the strength of it to Yanina, and the news I brought from there was perfectly crushing from our old friend."

"And Count Monte-Cristo has disappeared?"

"For the present, yes. Though I am sure that sooner or later he will show up again."

At this moment a loud uproar was heard near the door, and as Beauchamp opened it, a young man was seen who was struggling with the office boy to gain admission.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Beauchamp, in a tone of surprise, as he opened the door.

"Ah, Beauchamp!" exclaimed the stranger, "I knew you would admit me."

"At present I have not the honor of your acquaintance," replied Beauchamp, bowing.

"Permit me to refresh your memory; I am the man who called you into the court-room during the Benedetto trial. You were at the refreshment counter, and—"

"Ah, now I remember," said Beauchamp, in a friendly tone. "What can I do for you?"

"Pardon me, Monsieur Beauchamp, but I think I can do you a service."

"Then come into my office, Monsieur—what is your name now?"

"Gratillet, Monsieur Beauchamp," said the young man, following him into the office. After he had taken a chair proffered him he laughed to himself and in a tone of importance said:

"If I am not mistaken, you interest yourself for Benedetto?"

"A little, Monsieur Gratillet."

"When you have heard my report, you will do so more. I took good notice of Benedetto and have come to the conclusion that he has been picked out to do great things!"

"Really? Is he going to become a minister, or perhaps a king?"

"Laugh away; he will not die in the galleys."

"Then, perhaps, on the gallows; that is sometimes the end of a career like his."

"No, Benedetto is more ambitious than that. I will only give you the facts and tell you what I heard yesterday. Last night Benedetto received a visit in prison."

"A visit?"

"Just as I tell you. A veiled lady visited him and remained an hour with him. Her face I could not recognize."

"Have you got wings with which to pursue Benedetto?"

"No, Monsieur Beauchamp. At the end of the proceedings I took a carriage and arrived at the prison only a quarter of an hour after Benedetto."

"I call that promptness. You saw the lady then?"

"Yes; I did not recognize her perfectly, but imagine she is the wife of a banker who left for parts unknown about three months ago."

Beauchamp and Chateau-Renaud looked knowingly at one another, while Gratillet continued:

"The lady in question left the prison at ten o'clock and got into her carriage."

"A carriage?"

"No, a hackney coach she had hired."

"And you followed her again?"

"This time the matter was much easier; I got upon the box with the driver and arrived at her destination as soon as the occupant herself. The carriage drove to

No. 8 Rue Contrescarpe. I looked closely at the house and read a sign near the door with the following card: 'Monsieur Magloire, taxidermist.' The lady got out and rang the bell, but to no purpose. Becoming bolder she knocked at the door. A sliding window was opened and a gruff voice asked:

"'Well, what do you want?"

"'I have a letter to deliver,' said the lady softly.

"'From whom?'

"I could not make out what she said. A hand was put through the opening and took the letter, whereupon the sliding window was again closed. The lady waited a while longer and then rode off."

"Did you follow her?"

"Oh, no, why should I have done that? I am interested in Benedetto, and the lady is only a side character. First of all, Monsieur Beauchamp, do you think the story suitable for your paper?"

"Hm! that could be talked over. In the meantime take a cigar."

"Thanks. Have you ever seen the departure of the galley-slaves from Bicetre?"

"No, but I imagine it must be a curious sight."

"It is. This morning I was in Bicetre to see Benedetto depart, and I must confess I almost pitied him. The handsome Andrea Cavalcanti was undressed and his clothes cut in the usual way."

"Why do they do that?" asked Chateau-Renaud.

"To prevent the flight of a convict. Whoever sees these cut clothes knows they belong to a galley-slave. The other prisoners said nothing while the operation was being performed; Benedetto, however, cried out aloud

when the jailer cut his elegant coat, and when the rattle of the chains was heard in another room he gritted his teeth and cast such a look around him that I instinctively shuddered."

"Were you present during the chaining of the convicts, Monsieur Gratillet?"

"Certainly; I never do things by halves. The prisoners were brought into the courtyard and placed in rows of two each, who were tied to each other by a chain six feet long."

"Are you nearly finished with your story, Monsieur Gratillet?" said Beauchamp, thoughtfully.

"Directly. Just as the door opened through which the convicts have to pass to leave the courtyard, I noticed among the crowd assembled to see them off a small humpbacked man. On his crooked shoulders a monkey balanced, a poodle in uniform sat on its hind legs beside him, in his right hand he held a bird-cage, and along his left arm a large rat promenaded up and down. The rat had a wonderfully pointed nose and long tail. It ran up and down the whole time, looking in every direction with its sharp eyes. The prisoners, the jailers and spectators laughed at its antics. The hunchback drew nearer, and, as it seemed to me, looked at Benedetto. The latter, however, did not notice him, and now I perceived I had made a mistake, and that the gaze of the ratcatcher was directed to Benedetto's comrade in chains."

"Did you know this comrade in chains?" asked Beauchamp, hurriedly.

"Yes; it was a former priest named Anselmo, if you have ever heard anything of him."

"Certainly. The priest was a disgrace to the cloth,"

said Beauchamp. "So he is Benedetto's companion. A worthy pair."

"I thought so, too," continued Gratillet, laughing. "Suddenly the rat sprang from the arm of its master on to that of the ex-priest, and rubbing its pointed nose on his sleeve it fawned about him.

"'Oh, what a beautiful animal!' exclaimed Anselmo; 'present it to me.'

"'I would be a fool,' replied the hunchback, gruffly. 'I sell my animals, but I never give them away.'

"'But I have no money.'

"'You have a nice ring on your finger, give it to me and you can have my rat.'

"Now I am ready to swear to it," said Gratillet, solemnly, "that Anselmo had no ring on his finger before, whereas he had one now. He looked at the jailer and said: 'In case it is allowed, I should like to exchange my ring for the rat.'

"The jailer made no objection to this. The hunchback claimed that his rat was a wonderful animal, and he would show the tricks it could do. The rat sprang through little paper balloons, nodded and shook its head, just as it was asked, and finally crawled up Anselmo's sleeve. The prisoners were enthusiastic in their praises. Anselmo and the hunchback whispered softly together; finally, the jailer put a stop to the thing by shutting the gate and driving the prisoners back.

"'One word more,' exclaimed Anselmo, 'I do not know the name of my rat!'

"'The animal is called "Rat King,"' said the hunchback, putting his head once more through the door.

"I followed the hunchback; when he turned down a

narrow street I cried to him: 'Au revoir, Monsieur Magloire,' and the look he gave me told me I had guessed right."

"You believe then—" said Chateau-Renaud.

"That the letter which the lady delivered in the Rue Contrescarpe was written by Anselmo and given to the lady through Benedetto, the letter inclosed the order for the rat, and everything went smoothly. The final act in the drama will not permit itself to be long waited for."

"As soon as we are ready," said Beauchamp, "Monsieur Gratillet can write it up for our paper. Can I count you, Monsieur Gratillet, from to-day on as one of my staff?"

"I desire no greater honor," replied Gratillet, his face beaming with joy.

CHAPTER X

PONTOON NO. 2

THE galley-slaves were shipped from Chalons to Lyons. No accident marred the trip, and all the prisoners were in good humor, with the exception of Benedetto. Anselmo tried his best to arouse his comrade, but his efforts were fruitless. Benedetto remained silent and gloomy. When the convicts were leaving the ship at Lyons, Anselmo whispered to his companion:

"Magloire is a good fellow; the file he sent me is sharp."

"The file?" repeated Benedetto, not understanding the allusion; "he did not give you any instrument!"

"What a stupid fellow you are. But keep patience; later on I will tell you more."

Benedetto, since the journey from Paris, was no longer recognizable; he no longer resembled the proud Andrea Cavalcanti, and sometimes even thought he was going crazy.

What sustained him was the thought of the million his mother intended to give the Jesuits on the 25th of February. This million he must secure for himself; but how he was to do so he did not know himself.

At first he thought Anselmo would keep his word

and free him; but gradually this hope vanished, and as the column marched into Toulon on the 28th of January, Benedetto was on the verge of despair.

In Toulon the iron necklace was taken off of the prisoners and replaced by an iron ball fastened to the leg. The prisoners were brought to the lavatory, given a bath, and then dressed in the historical clothing of a galley-slave.

As Anselmo and Benedetto were of the same stature, it was only natural that they were both chained together. They were placed in pontoon No. 2, and the little rat-king was their companion.

The rat soon made itself at home with all the prison officials and the prisoners, and not a night passed but what it played its tricks. Anselmo had taught it a great deal more, and when he asked it:

"Little rat-king, what are your feelings for the king, the law, and the turnkeys?" the little animal would bow at every side, cross its front feet over its breast, and move its pointed nose as if it were murmuring prayers, at the same time casting its eyes to the floor. If Anselmo would then ask:

"What is the penalty for those condemned to death?"

The rat would throw itself flat on the ground, and lie motionless, as if to appear dead.

Benedetto was the only one who was not amused. Whenever the rat came near him he would tremble violently. If Anselmo saw it he would make sarcastic remarks about princely ways, which caused Benedetto to grind his teeth with rage. His only desire now was to get away from his comrades in chains. But there

was little hope for this, more especially as he heard a jailer one day tell Anselmo he should get rid of his grumbling companion; if the rat were to support the petition it would not be difficult, and the ex-priest laughingly replied:

"Not a bit of it; Benedetto is just as agreeable to me as another; let us leave things as they are!"

As soon as the jailer turned away, Benedetto, mad with rage, turned to the ex-priest and said:

"Why won't you free me from your society?"

"Because I do not wish to have any strange face about me," was the indifferent reply. "You do not embarrass me in the least, and as I do not embarrass you—"

"On the contrary, you are distasteful to me," interrupted Benedetto, violently.

"Really? Your candor pleases me. Under all circumstances, we shall stay together."

"And suppose I kill you?" hissed Benedetto.

"Hem, my boy, that is easier said than done. Besides, I can tell you why you hate me."

"I am curious to know! I hardly know myself why I hate you," said Benedetto, maliciously.

"Because you think I lied to you, because in prison I spoke of escape, and have not said a word about that since."

Benedetto stammered a few unintelligible words, and was ashamed to have had his thoughts read so easily.

"Do you know the story of Brutus, who pretended to be a simpleton, so as to bring about the downfall of Tarquin the more effectually?" asked Anselmo, with a malicious smile.

"You are making fun of me," Benedetto gruffly answered. "Did you deceive me when you gave me the letter for Monsieur Magloire?"

"Do you really think so?"

"What a question! Do you think Monsieur Magloire could aid us in escaping?"

"Suppose he has already done so."

Benedetto looked at his comrade with wide open mouth.

"Are you really so anxious to escape?" continued Anselmo.

"Really anxious? I would give my right hand were I able to escape from prison on a certain day!"

"And when is that?"

"I must leave Toulon on the night of the 24th of April."

"You must! That settles it."

"Do not be sarcastic—I must be at liberty or else—"

"Well? or else—"

"Then, you will not betray me, will you?"

"Your anxiety on that point comes rather late," said Anselmo dryly. "To reassure you, however, let me tell you that it is not to my interest to betray you. Look at me. Just as I stand here, I have the power to set you free on the spot."

Benedetto uttered a cry.

"Are you speaking the truth?" he breathlessly asked.

"And why should I deceive you? Let me give you my conditions, and if you accept them you will be free on the evening of the 24th of February."

"What are your conditions?" asked Benedetto faintly.

"Give me half of the million you are seeking to get, and we are quits."

The Corsican looked tremblingly at the ex-priest.

"How do you know?" he stammered.

"That you are seeking to get a million—well, out of your dreams. The words 'the 24th of February,' and 'one million,' form the Alpha and Omega of your thoughts, and in your sleep you constantly repeat these words. You want to be free on the 24th, so as to steal this million. Steal it, but give me my share!"

"And you want?" stammered Benedetto.

"One quarter! I could demand half, but I will be modest."

"How are you going to secure our freedom?" asked Benedetto after a pause.

"That is my affair! I have an accomplice whom I can trust."

"An accomplice? Who can it be?"

"Swear to me that you will give me a quarter part of your million, and I will show him to you."

Benedetto took the oath. Anselmo whistled for his rat, and, pointing to the little animal, solemnly said:

"Here is our savior—the little rat-king will free us!"

CHAPTER XI

THE DEAD LIVE

DR. D'AVIGNY sat in his private office and studied the sick-list of his asylum. A servant entered, and announced a young man who desired to speak with him.

"You know, Jean, that I do not like to receive visitors so late at night," said the physician.

"The gentleman gave me his card and told me you would receive him."

The doctor threw a glance at the card. No sooner had he read the name, Maximilian Morrel, than he hurriedly rose and said:

"Bring the gentleman in at once."

Dr. D'Avigny had only seen young Morrel once—at the time Valentine de Villefort sank apparently lifeless to the ground. As Maximilian entered, both men remembered the sorrowful circumstances under which they had met before, and, deeply moved, they shook each other's hand.

"Doctor," said Maximilian in a solemn voice, "I do not come to the physician but to the friend of the Villefort family."

D'Avigny bowed and Morrel continued:

"Can you tell me how Monsieur de Villefort is getting on?"

"His condition is hopeless," said the doctor sorrowfully; "as his attendant just informed me, he is again in possession of his senses, but I fear it is the last glimmering before the final extinguishment. He begged me to send for the district-attorney, as he wished to make an important communication to him, and as I hesitated he hurriedly said:

" 'D'Avigny, I have no time to lose; Death is already sitting on my tongue.' "

"Then we must be quick," murmured Maximilian to himself, and then speaking aloud he said: "Doctor, would a great excitement injure your patient?"

"That depends upon the nature of the excitement," answered D'Avigny. "There can hardly be any more joys for Villefort, and troubles I would keep aloof from him."

"It is a question of a great joy, which, however, is not free from certain anxieties."

"You are speaking in riddles, Monsieur Morrel."

"Then let me unravel these riddles to you. Valentine de Villefort lives."

The old physician swayed from side to side and would have fallen to the ground had not Morrel caught him in his arms. Hot tears rolled over D'Avigny's cheeks, and sobbing he asked:

"Is it no dream? Does Valentine live?"

"She lives, and yearns to shake her old friend's hand," replied Morrel.

He then narrated to the astonished physician the extraordinary circumstance of Valentine's rescue from death. He told the dangers Monte-Cristo had undergone for her; how he had made the poisoned goblet of Madame de Vil-

lefort harmless, and how he had rescued him, too, from a suicide's death.

"And who is this Count of Monte-Cristo?" asked D'Avigny when Maximilian had ended.

"Doctor," said Morrel solemnly, "here my story ends. Who and what the Count of Monte-Cristo is I am not at liberty to tell. He has a mission to fulfil, rewards here and punishes there, and I myself have been at times moved to believe him a divine person. There is a mystery surrounding him, which he alone can clear up; but this I know, he is a noble man."

"Where is Valentine now?" asked D'Avigny after a short pause.

"Since the fall of the house of Villefort, Valentine has lived with her grandfather, Monsieur Noirtier, on his estate near Marseilles."

"That is the reason, then, why Monsieur Noirtier disappeared so suddenly from Paris?" said D'Avigny.

"Yes, the Count of Monte-Cristo informed the old man that Valentine lived, and was in need of his protection. Monsieur Noirtier immediately arranged his affairs, and up to five days ago they were both living quietly at Olliolles, near Marseilles."

"And since then?" asked the physician, uneasily.

"About five days ago Valentine received this note. Please read it and tell me what you think of it."

Morrel handed the following letter to the doctor:

"MADEMOISELLE VALENTINE—In Paris, in the house of Dr. D'Avigny, a dying man awaits your consolation. If you wish to see your father alive, hurry to him.

"M. C."

"The Count of Monte-Cristo must have written this note," said D'Avigny. "The initials M. C. prove it."

"We thought so, too," said Maximilian.

"Do you know where the count is now?"

"No."

"Where could he have found out that Monsieur de Villefort is dying? I myself have only known it since two days," said D'Avigny, meditatively.

"Oh, the count sometimes appears to be endowed with miraculous powers!" exclaimed Morrel, enthusiastically. "Valentine immediately travelled here under my protection. I—"

At this moment the door opened, and a young man about twenty-five years of age, with a fine open face, entered the room. Monsieur d'Avigny took pride in introducing him to Maximilian as his son Fritz.

"Papa," he said to the old gentleman, "Monsieur de Villefort is sinking rapidly."

"You have come at the right time," said D'Avigny, turning toward Maximilian; "where is Valentine?"

"At the home of my sister Madame d'Herbault."

"Then tell the two ladies, please, to come here at once," said the old gentleman. "Valentine can be at hand to come to her father when I call."

Morrel went away, and the father and son went to Monsieur de Villefort.

CHAPTER XII

THE CONFESSION

WITH his head between his hands, Monsieur de Villefort sat in his easy-chair, as if an uninterested spectator. When the door opened he rose in his chair, and, looking expectantly at the two physicians who entered, said:

"Well, is the district-attorney coming?"

"He will be here soon," replied D'Avigny, to quiet the old man.

"But I have no more time," exclaimed Villefort, passionately.

"Monsieur de Villefort," said the physician earnestly, "you know that the district-attorney can only be informed in cases of the utmost importance, and—"

"And is it not an important case when a man who has himself filled the office of district-attorney for years wishes to speak to his successor before he dies?" said Villefort, sharply. "What is the name of the new district-attorney?"

"Monsieur de Flambois."

"Oh, my former assistant," muttered the sick man, with a bitter smile. "Doctor, it is a question of rehabilitation. Tell Monsieur de Flambois to hurry up."

"I will do so," said Fritz, after an interchange of looks with his father, and he immediately left the room.

The old physician also went away, and immediately afterward Morrel conducted his sister and Valentine into the private office of the doctor.

Monsieur d'Avigny with deep emotion drew the young girl, who was attired in deep mourning, to his bosom, while the tears fell on Valentine's cheeks.

"My dearly beloved child," he said, with tenderness. "Thank God that my old eyes are permitted to see you once more."

"And my father?" asked Valentine, sobbing.

"You will see him, Valentine. Remain patient for a little while longer; he wants to see the district-attorney, and, as far as I understand, it is about some former injustice which he wishes to repair. Confide in me, I shall call you when the time comes. In the meantime take some refreshment, as you must be weak from the journey."

Valentine and Julie withdrew to an apartment which had been prepared for them, and d'Avigny and Morrel remained alone.

"If I could only understand," said the old man meditatively, "how Monsieur de Villefort ever could have such a daughter."

"Perhaps Valentine's mother, Mademoiselle de St. Meran, had a noble nature."

"I hardly think so. Of course I did not know Monsieur de Villefort's first wife, but, from what I have heard of her, she was very miserly, and a fit companion for her husband. Old Madame de St. Meran, too, was not exactly a tender-hearted woman."

"But she loved Valentine dearly," Morrel remarked.

"I admit that; although this love did not prevent her from trying to force Valentine into an obnoxious marriage. Monsieur d'Epinay was of an old aristocratic family, and that was why the old lady thought he would be a good match for her granddaughter. No, they were all selfish, and Valentine can congratulate herself for not being like them."

The entrance of the servant, who announced the arrival of Monsieur de Flambois and Monsieur d'Avigny, put an end to the conversation. The old physician immediately conducted Monsieur de Flambois to the bedside of his patient, whose eyes lighted up when he recognized the district-attorney.

"Monsieur de Villefort," began the district-attorney, bowing low, "you desired to speak to me to tell me something important. Do you wish our interview to be private?"

"No," said Villefort, solemnly. "I desire Monsieur d'Avigny to remain and act as a witness."

The physician seated himself on the bed, while Monsieur de Flambois took up a position at the writing desk.

"Monsieur de Villefort, we are ready."

"Gentlemen," said the sick man, in a clear, firm voice, "thanks to me and thanks to my wife, Heloise de Villefort, my family name has become infamous and I am not surprised my father no longer wishes to bear it."

"But, Monsieur de Villefort," interrupted the official.

"Let me speak. What would you think of a man who, to save himself, condemns another in cold blood to imprisonment for life."

"I would call him a criminal," said Flambois solemnly.

"Well, I am such a criminal. In the year 1814, I condemned a young man to life imprisonment and the heavens did not fall; I rose step by step, and for twenty-five years was looked upon as an honorable official whose reputation was above suspicion, although in my own heart I knew I was a rogue. But the man I thought had rotted away in jail was alive and revenged himself upon me. The first wife who bore my name was my accomplice, the second was a poisoner. She murdered every one who stood in her way; my son and Valentine became her victims; my other son sprung from a criminal attachment. I tried to kill him by burying him alive; as a punishment for me, he was rescued to die on the gallows."

"No, Monsieur de Villefort, Benedetto's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment," said Monsieur de Flambois.

"That is worse than the gallows," stammered the sick man. "My first and my second wife, Benedetto and myself deserved to have our names looked upon with loathing, but Valentine, my poor innocent Valentine, did not deserve this shame, and on her account I speak to-day."

"I do not understand you," said the district-attorney. "Your daughter Valentine—"

"Ah, what fools!" exclaimed Villefort. "How could you imagine that Valentine was my daughter? No, gentlemen, Valentine is not a Villefort! How could an angel be a member of such a sinful race!"

"I thought as much," muttered d'Avigny to himself,

while Flambois looked at his former chief as if the latter were talking Sanscrit.

"When I married Renee de St. Meran," continued Monsieur de Villefort, after a short pause, "I was a young and ambitious official. My wife was also ambitious, and we were fitted in that respect for one another. Unfortunately for us both, there was a clause in the marriage contract, by which Monsieur and Madame de St. Meran pledged themselves to give our first child on its baptism a present of three hundred thousand francs. As soon as I was in possession of such a fortune, I could go to Paris, and once in the capital, I was sure to make my way. Renee was of the same mind as myself, she yearned to come to court and play a part in the world of society; Marseilles was too small for her. When Renee became *enceinte* we were both overjoyed. The birth of a child would smooth our path, and we only thought of the first smile of the little being, to arrange our plans. The event so anxiously awaited by us was to take place at the beginning of May, 1816. To have you understand what followed, I must go back to April, 1815. I was sitting at work on the evening of the 4th of April, when loud screams attracted my attention. I opened the window; it was ten o'clock, and in the moonlight I observed that the street in front of our house was filled with a noisy and turbulent crowd of people. Collecting my thoughts, I blew out my lamp. I saw a man running rapidly along the street, followed by a great crowd shouting, "Down with the Englishman." The man ran so quickly that he distanced all his pursuers, and I already thought that he was saved, when I saw him stagger and fall. In a moment his pursuers were upon him, a loud

cry was heard, and the next moment the unfortunate man was thrown into the river. Not long after all was still again. I lighted my lamp again and was about to continue my work, when I heard a slight tap at the window. I became frightened. Who could want me at this hour? Grasping a pistol, I walked cautiously into the garden, from whence proceeded cries for help. I listened, and could now hear a soft voice with a foreign accent whisper:

"'Help, my lord. For pity's sake help me.'

"I immediately thought of the cry, 'Down with the Englishman,' which I had heard before. This must be the man who had been thrown in the water. I grasped the man, who was shivering with cold and dripping with water, and led him into my library. By the light of the lamp I saw he was about thirty years old.

"'You have rescued me, sir,' he said in a soft voice, with a peculiar accent, 'but you will not find me ungrateful.'

"'Who are you, and what am I to do for you?' I asked him.

"'I was thought to be an English spy in the service of the royalists,' he said, laughing sorrowfully, 'and the excited crowd threw me into the river. Fortunately, I did not lose my senses; I dived under, swam a short distance and then gained the bank.'

"'Then you are not an Englishman?' I asked.

"'I, an Englishman?' he repeated, with his eyes sparkling with rage; 'what are you thinking of?'

"'But who then are you?' I exclaimed.

"He looked searchingly at me.

"'You are young,' he then said, 'you do not know what betrayal is; I will confide in you! Besides, you

are a Frenchman and hate the English as I do. Tell me where is the Emperor Napoleon at present?'

"'In Paris.'

"'Are you sure?'

"'Positive.'

"'You love the emperor?'

"'I am his faithful servant.'

"'Thank Heaven. Would you assist me to reach Paris?'

"'Paris?' I repeated in astonishment.

"'Yes, I must reach the capital as soon as possible. I must rescue the emperor.'

"'The roads are not safe,' I hesitatingly replied, 'and if you have no passport—'

"'You are an official,' he interrupted me, 'perhaps a judge?'

"'I am what is called in England attorney for the crown.'

"'Ah, in England there are no judges,' he violently said. 'In England are only hangmen! Thank God I am in France; and my ancestors were French.'

"'And your home?'

"'Is the Orient, the land of the sun,' he said with emotion, as his eyes filled with tears. 'I am an Indian prince.'

"'That is the reason you hate England!' I suddenly exclaimed, as a light dawned on me.

"'Hate it! I curse it!' he said, in a choking voice. 'It is the home of traitors and murderers.'

"'But did you not tell me a little while ago that you were of French descent?'

"'Yes. Have you forgotten the names of those French-

men who fought so gloriously for India's independence? Dupleix, Labourdonnaye and Lally came with an army to India. My father belonged to Lally's detachment, and fell on the 27th of October, 1803, in the battle of Laswari. During his stay in India, he married a Mahratta at Scindia's court; two children resulted therefrom, a boy and a girl, and the son is the one you have rescued to-day.'

"'Then you are really a Frenchman?'

"'No; I call myself Mahratta; the blood of my mother betrays itself in my veins, for she was the daughter of a prince.'

"'And her name?'

"'I have almost forgotten it myself, as I was not permitted to pronounce it for such a long time. About five years ago Scindia began anew the struggle against English tyranny. We were defeated in the battle of Gwalior, and I and my sister Naya, a beautiful girl of fifteen, were taken prisoners by the English. For five years we suffered martyrdom; we were brought to England, and finally separated. About two months ago I managed to escape. I reached the coast, was taken on board a Spanish ship, and finally set foot on French ground. Paris is the place I desire to go to. Napoleon has promised us help if we assist him against the English. The whole of India will rise up and crush England, and Napoleon's throne will be secured forever.'

"The handsome youth stood before me like a prophet, and I enthusiastically exclaimed:

"'Whatever I can do to assist your plans shall be done. Tell me your name, and I will fill out your passport.'

"'I am the Rajah Siwadji Daola,' he said.

"'And your sister?' I asked; 'is she free, too?'

"'No; but she soon will be. A prince of the Mahrattas followed Naya to England; he loves her, and will soon bring her to France.'

"'To France? Have they a place to go to here?' I eagerly asked.

"'Let my sister and her husband find protection in your house,' he simply said, 'and the gods will reward you.'

"I hesitated for a moment, and then I cordially answered:

"'Let it be as you say—my house shall be open to your sister!'

"'A thousand thanks,' he joyfully cried. 'And so that you know my sister, look here.'

"He took out of his silk belt the half of a peculiarly formed bracelet, and handed it to me with the words:

"'Look at this bracelet! Whoever brings you the other half, receive in your house as a favor to me. I cannot leave the bracelet with you, but if you have a piece of wax I can make an impression which will answer the same purpose.'

"Wax was soon found, the broad gold plate, with its numerous hieroglyphics, was pressed in it, and after the impression had been secured the rajah hid the bracelet in his belt.

"'When can I get the pass?' he asked.

"'To-morrow morning. What name shall I put in?'

"'The name of my father—Jean d'Arras.'

"The rajah, upon my solicitation, threw himself on

my bed and slept a few hours. As soon as the day dawned he left the house with me, enveloped in a wide mantle, and as we had no difficulty in getting the necessary passports from the prefecture, he was already that same morning on his way to Paris."

"Monsieur de Villefort," said D Avigny, anxiously, "you are exerting yourself too much; postpone the continuation until to-morrow."

"No, no," replied Villefort, "I must speak to-day; to-morrow would be too late.

"Three months later, Renee de St. Meran became my wife, the battle of Waterloo followed, and Napoleon was deposed forever. On the 6th of May, 1816, my wife gave birth to a child—a daughter. It was very sickly, though, and my mother-in-law feared it would not live until the next day. On the night following the birth of the child I was sitting reading at my wife's bedside, when I heard my name being softly called from the direction of the garden. At first I thought I was mistaken, but the cry was repeated, and I quietly slipped out. Near the garden hedge lay a white form; the moon was shining brightly, and I saw a woman's face of extraordinary beauty. Giving vent to a low murmur of astonishment, I drew near to the figure; when I perceived the glistening eyes and the satiny dark curls, I no longer doubted but what the woman who lay before me was Naya, the sister of the Rajah Siwadji.

"'You are Monsieur de Villefort?' she said, in a gentle voice.

"'Yes, and you are Naya,' I said, to make sure.

"'I am. My husband, the Rajah Duttjah, is dead. Save my child!'

"At these words the woman opened the white mantle which covered her, and I saw a new-born babe, which was wrapped up in a silk cloth. The poor mother looked anxiously at me. I took the child in my arms and a happy smile passed over the pale face.

"'Now I can die peacefully,' she whispered; 'my husband died as we were about to leave England—I felt myself a mother—I had to live. Night and day I have wandered. Barely two hours ago my child was born; I dragged myself to the house, but my strength failed me—here—is—the—bracelet—'

"She paused suddenly—I bent over her—she was dead. From her cold hand I took the half of the gold bracelet, and ran into the house. My wife was fast asleep. I laid the child in the cradle near my little daughter, and just thinking whether I should call the nurse who slept in the next room, when I perceived that I had laid the living child next to a dead one. Our little daughter had breathed her last!

"I stood as if struck by lightning. All the proud hopes we had built on the child's birth were gone. Suddenly the strange child began to cry, and my plan was quickly made. With trembling hands I dressed the strange child—it was a girl, too—in the clothes of my own daughter, and gathering the silk cloth about the latter, I carried her to the garden and placed her in Naya's arms.

"One hour later my wife awoke, and when she asked for our child, I gave her Naya's daughter!"

"Did not Madame de Villefort ever hear of the change which had been made?" asked the district-attorney.

"Oh, yes; my wife had placed a small chain with a

golden cross around our child's neck just after it was born; in my hurry I had forgotten to put this talisman on the strange child; I first denied, then confessed, everything. Instead of heaping reproaches on me, she acquiesced in the fraud. The next day my father-in-law came; Naya's daughter was baptized under the name of Valentine de Villefort, and on the bed of the child, my happy parents-in-law laid my appointment as district-attorney in Paris, and bonds to the value of three hundred thousand francs. Naya, with the dead child in her arms, was found the next day at our door. They were both buried in the potter's field. The papers Naya carried were written in the Indian language; they were given to me as a high official, and since then they, together with the wax impression and the half of the bracelet, have lain in my private portfolio which always stands near my bed."

Upon a wink from Villefort, Monsieur de Flambois opened the portfolio designated; everything was found there as he had said.

"Did you never hear again from Daola?" said d'Avigny after a pause.

"Yes; three years later the rajah wrote me from India. He had fought at Waterloo, was again a captive of the English, and only had an opportunity at the end of a year to escape. Together with the Rajah Scindia, who later on went over to England, he had again begun the struggle for independence; he is now living in the interior of Hindustan, waiting for a better opportunity. He asked me for news from Naya; I wrote him I knew nothing of her, and that ended our correspondence.

"This is my confession. Now use justice and erase from the headstone under which Naya's daughter rests the name of Valentine de Villefort."

"Suppose Valentine de Villefort is still alive?" asked D'Avigny solemnly.

CHAPTER XIII

FORGIVENESS

BOTH Villefort and Monsieur de Flambois uttered a cry of astonishment, and while the latter stammered forth an "Impossible," the sick man whispered: "To-day miracles do not occur any more!"

"Gentlemen," said the physician quietly, "you know I am a sensible man; why should I try to tell you a fable?"

"But I was at the funeral," stammered Flambois.

"I also, and yet I tell you the dead woman lives," persisted D'Avigny, "or if we want to call it by its proper name, Valentine de Villefort is dead and the daughter of Naya and the Rajah Duttjah lives."

"Then Valentine must have been buried alive," muttered Villefort, fixing his eyes upon the physician.

"And if that were the case?" said D'Avigny solemnly.

"Then I would say God has done a miracle to save the innocent," said Villefort, the tears starting in his eyes.

"Monsieur de Villefort," said the physician, earnestly, "do you know how Valentine died?"

"Too well—she was poisoned by my wife."

"What for?"

"Madame de Villefort wished to have Valentine's fortune go to her son."

"That is dastardly," said the district-attorney.

"Do you remember, Monsieur de Villefort," continued D'Avigny, "to have seen a mysterious man in your house some time prior to Valentine's death, whose mission it appears is to reward the good and punish the guilty?"

"Yes, I remember; you mean the Count of Monte-Cristo," said Villefort, with emotion.

"The Count of Monte-Cristo," repeated the district-attorney, contemptuously, "the adventurer?"

"Sir, do not blaspheme!" exclaimed Villefort, passionately; "if Valentine is saved she owes it to that God in the form of man—the Count of Monte-Cristo! He alone has the power to change the dead into the living. If Valentine lives, I will believe God has pardoned a portion of my sins."

"Gentlemen," said the district-attorney, doubtingly, "I only believe what I see; if Valentine de Villefort lives, let her show herself."

"Maximilian," called D'Avigny, opening the door, "tell Valentine to come in."

"Whom did you just call?" asked Villefort, when D'Avigny had closed the door again.

"Maximilian Morrel, Valentine's betrothed, the son of the shipping merchant Morrel, of Marseilles."

"Morrel—Marseilles—Edmond Dantes," murmured Villefort. "Ah, there is justice in Heaven!"

The door was now opened, and Valentine entered.

She strode to Villefort's bed and sank on her knees beside it.

"Oh, father," she sobbed, embracing him tenderly. "Thank God, I see you again!"

Villefort gazed at Valentine as if she were a spectre; but tears fell on the young girl's cheeks, and his lean hands were crossed as if in prayer.

"Father, dearly beloved father!" stammered Valentine, weepingly, "why do you not speak? Have you no word of welcome for your Valentine?"

"Monsieur de Flambois, do you still doubt?" asked d'Avigny, softly.

"Yes, not your statement, but my reason," said the district-attorney, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"Valentine," whispered Villefort, in a broken voice, "kiss me. Now I can die easy."

"Oh, father, father, you must not die!" she weepingly cried.

"I must, darling, but I die happy, since I know you will be well taken care of. Monsieur Morrel," he said, turning to the young man, "you know what unhappiness I once caused your father?"

"No, Monsieur de Villefort, I have forgotten everything, and only know that you are Valentine's father," said Maximilian, cordially. "Give us your blessing."

"No, no!" said Villefort, anxiously; "I dare not—I am not worthy of it! But one thing I can do; I can tell Valentine who she is, and Monsieur de Flambois and Monsieur d'Avigny will corroborate my words. Valentine, you, whom I have so often called daughter, look at me and listen to my words. You are the daughter of the Rajah Duttjah and his wife Naya. The marriage

of your parents was celebrated at Epping Forest, in England, by a Brahmin, who was also a prisoner there; in the portfolio there you will find the paper relating to the marriage. Do not look at me so fearfully, my poor darling, I am speaking the truth, and these gentlemen will tell you later on all the details. Your parents are both dead. There is a letter in the portfolio from your mother's brother, the Rajah Siwadji Daola. It was written in 1818. If Daolo still lives, he will find out that I deceived him; that I saw his sister die, and that Naya's child still lives."

"But, father," said Valentine, passionately, "if my parents are both dead, and you brought me up, I am nevertheless your daughter."

"Thanks, Valentine. But before my strength gives way, I must perform another duty. Doctor, a glass of wine; I have one more favor to ask of Valentine."

D'Avigny poured out a glass of red wine for Monsieur de Villefort, and Valentine put her arm around the dying man's neck, and rested his head against her bosom.

"I want you to look after my son, Valentine," whispered Villefort. "Oh, what would I not give if I could wear the chains instead of him—what is death to the life led by a galley-slave? If it is in your power to do anything for Benedetto, do not fail to do it. He is a scoundrel, but I was the cause of his downfall. Have mercy on him, and I die peacefully!"

"Father," said Valentine, solemnly, "your wish shall be sacred to me. I shall go in search of Benedetto, and bring him your last wishes."

"You are—an—angel," stammered Villefort. "Farewell. Ah—this—is—death!"

A shiver ran through Villefort's frame—a deep groan —a long breath—he was dead.

As soon as Valentine's first grief subsided, the physician persuaded her to stay in her room for the rest of the night, while the gentlemen conferred about the wonderful confession they had heard.

"If I only knew," said Flambois, thoughtfully, "what the papers written in the Indian language contain—I—"

"Monsieur de Flambois," interrupted young D'Avigny, modestly, "if you give me the documents I will translate them for you."

"Really? How can you do it?" asked the district-attorney, doubtingly.

"Very easily. Besides my profession as a doctor, I am an enthusiastic Orientalist. I am always in hopes of being able to go to India; the home of the lotus flower has always had attractions for me. Give me the papers and I will give you the translation to-morrow."

"Here are the papers," said Flambois, thoughtfully.

They then separated.

The next day, as D'Avigny was sitting with his daughter, Julie, Valentine and Maximilian at table, a light knock was heard at the door, and in obedience to the summons to come in, Ali, Monte-Cristo's black servant, appeared on the threshold.

Valentine and Maximilian uttered a cry of surprise. Ali bowed deeply, handed the physician a letter, and disappeared.

D'Avigny opened it and read the following:

"Waiting and hoping! In these two words lies the mystery of life. Be courageous and God will help."

As soon as Monsieur de Villefort's remains were buried, Valentine, Maximilian and Julie returned to Marseilles. Valentine wished to make the journey to Toulon, and then go to Italy for the remainder of the winter with Maximilian, her grandfather, and the Herbaults. D'Avigny's last words at the parting were:

"Beware of Benedetto!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE RAT-KING

THE days at the Bagnio passed monotonously. The rat furnished the evening's amusement, and in the same degree as Benedetto was excited, Anselmo remained calm and cool. On the evening of the 24th of February, the young man's patience was exhausted, and he forgot himself so much as to call Anselmo a liar and traitor, even threatening him with death.

"Come, come," said Anselmo indifferently, "don't be so violent. Instead of exciting yourself you had better be calm and tell me what relation it has with the million."

"That means," hissed Benedetto, "I should tell you my secret."

"You are a fool," said Anselmo, laughing; "remember that you can never get the million without my aid, and therefore leave off your sulks and speak."

"You are always right," growled Benedetto. "You have my fate in your hands and I must speak. The million, of course, must first be earned—"

"I am not so foolish as to imagine that the million will fly into my mouth like a broiled pigeon," inter-

rupted Anselmo; "but first of all, I must know if you have some right to this million?"

"Certainly," replied Benedetto; "if the million should slip from my grasp, I should look upon myself as being robbed."

"Really—who is the thief?"

"A woman!"

"I thought so; the lady no doubt who took charge of the letter?"

"The same."

"And you must be set free punctually on the 24th?"

"Yes, on the 25th the money would be irredeemably lost."

"H'm! that would be fatal. Well, I shall arrange it."

"You arrange it? Are you ever going to tell me how you intend to set us free?"

Anselmo peered cautiously about. The jailers were sleeping in the corners, and the other prisoners, as it was Sunday, were amusing themselves with the rat, which ran from board to board, performing the most difficult tricks.

"I will call our savior at once," whispered Anselmo, and, whistling softly, he called the little rat-king to him.

The rat immediately came to its master and climbed upon his knee. Anselmo took the animal in his hand, put it on its back, and took from under its thick, hairy skin a small, thin instrument called in galley-slave slang "cow's tail."

Benedetto uttered a cry of astonishment. Anselmo waved before his comrade's eyes a narrow little tooth-saw.

"Do you believe in my promise now?" the ex-priest triumphantly exclaimed: "the jailers call our little animal 'rat!' I call him 'necessary.'"

Benedetto laughed aloud. Anselmo placed the instrument back in its place and the little rat-king sprang away, while Benedetto looked at him deaf and dumb with astonishment.

"I am convinced now," he finally said, breathing deeply, "and now you shall hear how the million is to be got. A lady will come here on the 24th—"

"Are you sure of it?"

"Positive. On the 25th this woman will draw one million to give to others."

"You are joking—she intends to give away a million?"

"Yes, and we two will prevent her," said Benedetto, firmly.

"And who is to get the million?"

"The Church, of course; you understand, now, that I must be free on the 24th, so as to be able to follow the lady and take the million from her."

"Yes, I understand. Who is the woman?"

Benedetto shrugged his shoulders.

"Do not bother yourself about that, that is my affair." He answered indifferently.

"Is it a former girl of yours?"

"No."

"A relative?"

"No."

"Good. Keep your secret. Tell me one thing more. Will it be a stabbing case?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't make yourself so green. From what I know of the world, this woman, who intends to give the money to the Church, will not offer it to you. You will take it from her, and if she resists—" He finished the sentence with a suggestive gesture.

Benedetto became pale as death. He bit his lips and in a hollow voice replied:

"What is necessary will occur."

"Good. I am pleased with you; but look—there comes a lady on our pontoon. Perhaps that is your millionnairess."

Benedetto looked in the direction indicated. A lady, leaning on the arm of a gentleman and accompanied by several high officials, was coming toward him.

The Corsican gave vent to an oath and made a movement as if he intended to throw himself upon the party. "Redhead," said the jailer, letting his heavy stick fall on Benedetto's shoulders, "you are trying to fly away?" Benedetto gritted his teeth. He had recognized Valentine, and as she was a Villefort, and occupied the place he thought ought to have been his own, he would have liked to have wrung her neck. He recognized Morrel, whom he had seen in Monte-Cristo's house at Auteuil, and he, too, made his anger rise. He thought they had both come to gloat over his shame. The head officer whispered a few words to the jailer, and immediately afterward Benedetto and Anselmo were ushered into the presence of the visitors.

"They take me along too because they can't help it," said Anselmo wickedly, pointing to the chain which bound them.

The jailer nodded, and the ex-priest whispered in Benedetto's ear:

"Commit no follies. You look as if you would like to poison every one."

"That is what I should like to do. But have no fear, I will be circumspect."

"Which one of you is named Benedetto?" asked the inspector, gruffly, turning to the convicts.

"I," said the former Prince Cavalcanti, modestly.

"You are wanted. Follow me, but do not speak a word or else you will be put in the black hole."

Benedetto bowed silently, and the next minute stood with his comrade before Valentine.

The young girl drew back in terror, as she saw him whom she had thought was her brother. She soon collected herself and gently said:

"Sir, Monsieur de Villefort is dead."

Benedetto's eyes shone. He felt a wild joy at the death of the man he so bitterly hated.

"On his death-bed," continued Valentine with emotion, "he thought of you, and the officials have carried out his last wishes, and allowed me to bring you his regards and certain ameliorations for you. From this day on you are freed from double chains, and if you conduct yourself well in the future, you can hope for other mercies. Farewell, and may God be with you."

Valentine's voice broke, Maximilian laid his arm protectingly around the young girl and led her away, while Benedetto and Anselmo were brought back to their comrades.

"Who is the lady?" asked Anselmo. "She is very handsome."

Benedetto remained silent and the ex-priest looked distrustfully at him.

Toward evening the blacksmith came, and Benedetto was freed from Anselmo.

"Keep up your spirits," said the jailer to the ex-priest, "and I will see what can be done for you. In a few days a new column will arrive, and if you conduct yourself properly, I will see that you get no new comrade."

"I will let my little rat-king intercede for me," said Anselmo, laughing, and the jailer nodded.

The 24th of February dawned, and Benedetto, who had not closed an eye during the night, looked so miserable in the morning that Anselmo became frightened.

"Come, now, you are frightened, perhaps?" he maliciously asked. The look he received from his comrade made him pause.

The prisoners went as usual to work, and gradually Benedetto calmed down. The night was to bring the decision, and if Anselmo lied he would make him pay dearly for it.

During this time a carriage with four horses rode from Aubagne to Beaussuet. At the inn of the latter place it stopped, and while the guard put fresh horses in the traces, the occupant of the coach, a heavily veiled woman, got out and asked of the postmaster who advanced how far it was to the nearest vicarage.

"About fifty steps from the inn," he said.

"Then please let some one come along with me to show me the way," begged the lady.

"Directly, madame. Jean, lead this lady to the vicarage."

"Yes, Monseiur Etienne," was the servant's reply, "but the priest is not at home."

"What?" said the lady, astonished. "Where is he, then?"

"I do not know. He rode past me this morning. Perhaps the housekeeper can tell us," added the servant.

"Good. Let us go there," said the lady, and before the end of five minutes they were at the vicarage.

The door was opened by an elderly woman. She made a courtesy when she saw the lady, and politely said: "Ah, madame—you are here."

"Were you expecting me?" asked the lady, astonished.

"Certainly; his reverence was unfortunately obliged to go on a journey, but there is a letter here for Madame Danglars, if you are the lady."

"I am Madame Danglars," said the lady, quickly.

The old woman handed her a letter, and invited her to make herself at home. Upon which she left.

As soon as the lady found herself alone, she hastily tore open the letter. It contained a sealed packet, and these lines:

"MADAME—I am, unfortunately, not able to receive you personally. A journey obliges me to be disrespectful. Nevertheless I hope to see you to-morrow, and beg you to make yourself comfortable in my house. All your conditions have been fulfilled. I inclose a note addressed to the port inspector at Toulon and hope everything will turn out as you desire.

"JEAN BALAIS, Curate of Beaussuet."

The lady put the letter and the note in her pocket, and as the old lady entered with a cup of steaming bouillon, she hesitatingly said:

"Did the priest tell you I was going to stay here over night?"

"Yes, madame! Your room is ready, and I hope you will sleep soundly," replied the woman, cordially.

"The house is safe?" asked Madame Danglars, looking anxiously about.

"Certainly, madame; we are hid here as if in Abraham's bosom."

The lady drank the bouillon, and then said:

"Will you please show me my room?"

"Yes, madame! I hope it will please you," replied the woman, as she walked up the stairs, followed by the lady.

Here she opened a door, and the stranger looked in and saw a large, plainly furnished room. At one side stood a snow-white bed, a washstand, some chairs, and an old-fashioned bureau.

"Does this closet lock?" asked Madame Danglars, examining the lock. "I have a jewel-case in the coach which I would like to bring to a place of security."

"Ah, the closet is as safe as the poor-box," the old lady assured her.

The lady nodded her pleasure at this, and, after she had convinced herself that the door of the room was in order, she went back to the coach, took a portfolio from the jewel-casket, and brought it to the vicarage. The old lady awaited her at the door; Madame Danglars walked past her and went to the upper story, opened the closet, put the box in it, closed the door carefully, and put both

keys in her pocket. She then went downstairs again, and, turning to the old woman, said:

"For the present, good-by; I shall probably be back again before night."

"Good-by, madame; but do not stay out too late. A storm is coming up, and the roads of Oliolles are dangerous at night."

"I will try to be back soon. Adieu."

Madame Danglars got into her carriage and drove off in the direction of Toulon.

The feelings of the poor woman, who was going to the Bagnio to see Benedetto as she had promised, can be imagined. She had seen all her hopes reduced to nothing. Her husband had fled after a shameful bankruptcy, her lover had deserted her, her daughter had disappeared without leaving a word behind her, and what was left to her? The child of her shame, who had been sentenced to the galleys for murder.

She had sacrificed everything for this son, whom she loved dearly; the Jesuits had taken her million, and saved Benedetto from the gallows. Though, to her idea, the galleys was worse than death; but there was a chance of his getting free. No, she did not wish to think any more; she would bury herself in a convent in Asia Minor, and forget everything.

Toulon was at length reached; the driver took the road to the port, and she felt her heart cease beating. In a little while she would see Benedetto; the carriage stopped; the driver got out and opened the door.

"Will you please step out? Here is the Bagnio."

With trembling limbs, Madame Danglars left the coach, and slipping a few gold pieces into his hand, she said:

"Make yourself comfortable in the nearest saloon; in about three hours we shall return home."

"To-day, madame?" asked the man; "that would be impossible."

"Why impossible? Get fresh horses, I will pay you for everything."

"I am very sorry, madame, but the storm, the mistral will come very soon, and while the mistral lasts we cannot ride."

"Then I must look for another driver; I cannot delay my return."

"Madame, believe me, you will not find any one who will drive you while the storm lasts. Wait till to-morrow. I will put up my horses at the Black Eagle and await your commands there."

"I will think about it, but doubt whether I shall follow your advice. Adieu."

Madame Danglars entered the office of the port inspector and the driver drove off.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE BAGNIO

"WELL, what is the matter now?" asked the inspector, gruffly, as Madame Danglars handed him the priest's letter. He grumblingly opened the letter, but when he had read its contents his face lighted up and, making a respectful bow, he said:

"Madame, after reading these lines, I can only carry out all your wishes, as far as they are confined within the limits of the rules in force here. You desire to see one of our prisoners?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are aware that such an interview can only take place in the presence of the chaplain?"

Madame Danglars became frightened. She had not expected this.

"I will have the chaplain informed," continued the official. "In fact, I shall let him come into my office. This is a special favor. Yesterday there was a lady here to see Benedetto, who was not permitted to converse with

him except in the presence of the port inspector and the jailer."

"A lady?" exclaimed Madame Danglars, vivaciously. "Can you tell me who she was?"

"Oh, certainly, it was Mademoiselle de Villefort, the daughter of the recently deceased district-attorney."

"Monsieur de Villefort is dead?" said Madame Danglars in a choking voice.

"Yes, madame, he died in a private lunatic asylum in Paris. Did you know the gentleman?"

"Yes, slightly," replied Madame Danglars, restraining her emotion. "If you would let the gentleman be informed now—"

"At once, madame," said the official.

He wrote a few lines and went away, promising to return shortly. In about half an hour the chaplain appeared. He bowed respectfully, and said:

"Madame, I am aware of the reason which brings you here."

"What, you know?" exclaimed Madame Danglars, frightened.

"Calm yourself, madame; the secrets which are intrusted to me are buried. I must witness your interview as a matter of form, but I shall neither hear nor see."

Madame Danglars with tears in her eyes thanked the chaplain. The next minute the door opened and Benedetto appeared, accompanied by the jailer. When the poor mother saw the yellow and red clothing, the green cap, and the chain which led from the waist to the ankle, she uttered a low cry and clutched the arm of a chair to prevent herself from fainting. Upon a wink from the

chaplain, who wore the dress of a Jesuit priest, the jailer departed, and after the priest had closed the door, he turned toward Benedetto, and said:

"My son, thank God for his mercy, and try to show yourself worthy of it."

Neither Madame Danglars nor the priest noticed the smile which flitted across the convict's face. Benedetto collected himself immediately, and taking off his hat he bent his knee to his mother and crossed his eyes with his hand. The priest sat in the window alcove, pulled a prayer-book out of his pocket and began to read; Madame Danglars threw a look around, then she took the bald-shaved head of Benedetto in her hands and sobbingly murmured:

"My poor, poor son!"

"A thousand thanks, mother, for coming," said the hypocritical convict.

"Oh, I desired to come, it was necessary for me to see you again," stammered the poor woman.

"How good you are! Are you aware that my father pursued me even on his death-bed? He sent his daughter, my sister, here; she brought me his last regards, but she did not give me her hand nor call me brother."

"My son, forget everything bad that has been done to you; forgive your enemies, as you desire to be yourself forgiven," implored the poor mother.

"For your sake, then. But, tell me, mother, are you really going to leave France?"

"Yes; to-morrow, at this hour, I shall sail."

"But you are not going alone; the journey is so far, and I fear danger for you."

"Thanks, Benedetto, for your anxiety. How happy you make me. But calm yourself, I shall dwell in the society of pious women, who will protect me."

"Yes, I forgot. You gave your fortune to buy this protection—the price you paid was pretty steep."

"Benedetto, you blaspheme. Your life is not too dear for me to purchase."

"I wish I could earn your love," murmured Benedetto, apparently annihilated; "you gave up a million to rescue me. If you had more money, I am sure you would sacrifice it to secure my full pardon."

"Oh, I do not give up all hope yet," exclaimed Madame Danglars, vivaciously.

"What? Have you still got the million?" asked Benedetto, hastily.

"I shall not deliver the money before to-morrow. But that has nothing to do with the matter. What I have promised, I keep."

Benedetto remained silent, while a thousand confused ideas ran through his mind. He stood with downcast eyes, his left hand carelessly stroking his chain and his right crumpling his green cap.

"Mother," he finally said, in a low voice, "there is no use speaking of the past—let us think of the future. You are going to depart to-morrow; where are you staying now?"

"I live at the vicarage of Beaussuet. The Jesuit fathers recommended me there, and I am staying there over-night, although the priest is absent."

"Oh, God!" sobbed Benedetto, "if I could only accompany you."

"I would be glad, too; I have a rough road to go

back to Beaussuet. The mistral blows, and the roads of Oliolles are said to be so dangerous that my driver refuses to take me back to-night. Well, I will find another one."

"But why do you not stay in Toulon until the morning?"

"Impossible. I must hurry back to Beaussuet. I left the money at the vicarage."

"Wasn't that careless? A lonely vicarage, whose owner is absent—"

"I took good care of it; the portfolio containing the money is stowed safely away in a tight closet, the key of which I carry."

"But the portfolio must be a large one. It is not so easy to wrap up a million," said Benedetto, inquisitively.

"Yes, if I had to deliver the whole sum in coin; but that is not the case. Only a small part of the million is in gold, the rest is in bank-notes."

Benedetto nodded. He knew now exactly what he had desired to find out, and as the chaplain rose, and gently hinted that the time for the interview had expired, the convict turned to his mother, and weepingly said:

"Bless me, mother."

Madame Danglars placed her trembling hands on his head, and tenderly whispered:

"God be with you!"

Her strength deserted her; and while Benedetto was being led out by a jailer, she leaned faintingly against a chair.

The priest consoled her. She sorrowfully shook her

head, collected herself, slipped a thousand-franc note into the priest's hand, and murmured:

"Give that to those who are as unhappy as I am."

The next moment she wrapped her cloak firmly about her, and strode toward the inn where the driver awaited her.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ESCAPE

"WELL," said Anselmo to his comrade as the latter returned, "how do things stand?"

Benedetto did not answer at first, but seated himself on a block of wood and looked steadfastly before him.

"Well, has the million been stolen?" asked Anselmo, growing impatient.

"No, the million is safe for us," replied Benedetto.

"So much the better. This mistral is very favorable to us. It helps our escape."

"Really? Anselmo, we must be free in two hours."

"I shall look out for that—but what will happen then? Have you a plan?"

"Yes. Do you know the village of Beaussuet?"

"Yes. It is near the gorge of Oliolles."

"Right. We must reach this village to-night, even though we run the danger of being caught and brought back, if we escape by daylight."

"What are you talking about. There is no daylight to-day. One can hardly see one's hand now, and in two hours it will be night."

"But suppose we should be locked up in the pontoons?"

"That is what I desire. We must flee by way of the pontoons."

"And our chains?"

"Have you forgotten our little Rat King?"

"You are talking nonsense again."

"Listen, Benedetto. When a million is involved, I never joke. The saw our necessary carries will cut our chains in ten minutes. And now to work. Here comes the overseer."

The convicts grasped one of the heavy logs and pretended to be working hard peeling off the rind. As Anselmo had rightly predicted, one could not see one's own hand, and no one observed Anselmo and his companion glide toward the pontoon, which was empty.

"Lie flat on the ground," Anselmo ordered, "and feel about with your hands."

Benedetto did as he was told. Suddenly he uttered a low cry as his hand came in contact with a dark object, which flitted about.

"What a noise you make," grumbled Anselmo. "You have disturbed our poor little Rat King from his work."

"Ah, now I feel a split, too. Has the rat gnawed it through?" whispered Benedetto, gleefully.

"Certainly. The courageous animal has been working to free us for over a month. As you might have noticed, I smeared the floor of our pontoon with grease, in consequence of which our shrewd rat has spent all his spare moments here, and now his business is ended. The boards are gnawed through."

"Ah! then we are to escape by swimming?" asked Benedetto, surprised.

"Have you finally found out? You are not afraid, are you?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Benedetto hastily. "Freedom at any price."

"Now you please me! Let us go now and take up our work again before our absence is noticed."

"One word more! Have you thought of our clothes?"

"I have thought of everything. Trust in me."

The convicts returned to their work, but soon after the weather became so bad that the jailers stopped work and formed the prisoners in columns to return them to the pontoons. The storm broke with such fury that the masts snapped and the sails flew about. A piece of a mast knocked a convict overboard, and when he was fished up his skull was found to be fractured. A cry of terror ran through the lines and the jailers hastened to bring the columns to the pontoons. Benedetto and Anselmo cowered in their corners and listened to the roar of the mistral. The louder it became, the more their hearts beat with joy.

"Are you ready?" whispered Anselmo to his comrade.

"Yes."

"Then forward! It is a question of life or death."

They both lay flat on the ground and Anselmo drew from a hole a package wrapped in sail cloth. "Here, take this package," the ex-priest told his companion, "and give it to me as soon as I am in the water. Do you see the plank which our little pet gnawed through? Well, it can be shoved aside, and by that way we come to a cave where instruments and nails are kept. In this cave is a door, to which I have the key which locks it.

Now pay attention; I am turning the key. Forward, in the devil's name!" Through the open door Anselmo carefully glided into the water, which surged and roared. Benedetto handed him the package and glided likewise into the river, and while the pontoon creaked and groaned, torn by the force of the storm, the two convicts disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE MOUNTAIN PASS OF OLIOLLES

MADAME DANGLARS had returned to the inn and asked feverishly for fresh horses, so as to be able to drive to Beaussuet. The innkeeper politely assured her it was impossible to carry out her wishes. Madame Danglars, without changing a muscle, looked steadily at the man. To her idea money could do anything, and she therefore opened her purse, and placing five hundred francs on the table, asked once more for fresh horses. The innkeeper immediately remembered that there was a man in Toulon who would risk his own and his horses' lives for money, and he sent a messenger for him. Two long hours passed before the messenger returned. He brought a favorable answer. Father Jacob, that was the man's name, would come at four o'clock with two good horses.

"Who is this Father Jacob?" asked Madame Danglars of the innkeeper.

"Oh, he is a former city boarder," replied the host, laughing, as he gave a suggestive glance in the direction of the Bagnio.

Madame Danglars shuddered.

"Does he know how to drive?" she asked.

"Like Satan. He used to be a driver of the mail coach, but got a few years in the galleys for assisting robbers to plunder the mails. He is now, however, a good, honest man, and you can safely trust yourself to his care."

What was the baroness to do? She patiently sat down, and breathed more freely when the clock struck four, and the expected coachman arrived with two splendid horses.

"So you want to drive me to Beaussuet?" asked Madame Danglars, vivaciously.

"Yes, madame, for five hundred francs."

"Then harness your horses at once."

"But," stammered the ex-convict, scratching his head, "I make it a rule to take money in advance."

"Good! Here is the money, and go quick, because I am in a hurry."

"I am in a hurry to go too. The roads will not get any better, and the mountain passes of Oliolles are not easy to ride over, even in good weather."

In less than a quarter of an hour, the baroness sat in the coach. The innkeeper stood at the door, and, as the horses started, he whispered to the coachman: "Take care-of yourself, old fellow. You know you have every reason to be prudent."

"I will be so," replied Jacob, as he whipped the horses and drove off.

In the meantime, the storm continued with unabated vigor, tearing up trees, rolling the waves mountains high, and sometimes shaking the heavy coach as if it had been a feather. The horses seemed to care as little

for the weather as the coachman. Madame Danglars, however, became terribly excited, and, sobbing bitterly, cowered in a corner of the carriage. Around about her, as within her, all was dark. She still thought she heard the rattling of Benedetto's chains in the roar and fury of the storm—she thought she could distinguish the soft voice of Benedetto. Suddenly a sharp jolt was felt, the coachman uttered an oath, and Madame Danglars sank in a semi-unconscious condition against the cushions of the coach.

When she recovered herself she became aware that one of the horses had stumbled; the coachman was still swearing, and tried to raise the animal up. Suddenly he came to the carriage door, and grumblingly said:

"Madame, I must give you your money back. We will not be able to reach Beaussuet."

The storm whistled and roared with bitter fury. Madame Danglars looked anxiously at the man, and in a hollow voice asked:

"Where are we?"

"The devil only knows. These passes look all alike."

"But we cannot remain here. What would become of us?" said the poor woman sobbing.

"Come, come, do not carry on so," Jacob consolingly said.

"These passes have always been dangerous. Thirty years ago I met with a misfortune at this same place; oh, when I think of that time—"

The face of the ex-convict darkened; Madame Danglars looked anxiously at him, and murmured softly:

"May God have mercy upon me!"

The man paused for a moment and then said:

"I know another way out of the difficulty. We could return to Oliolles, which is fifteen minutes distant, and some one there would fix my axle, which the horse in falling broke. We could wait at Oliolles until the storm subsides. It won't rage so furiously long. I know the mistral well."

"And you promise me you will go ahead again as soon as the storm is over?"

"As true as I stand here," the man replied.

Madame Danglars rose up and got out, while Jacob unharnessed the horses and took one of the coach lamps in his hand.

"Now follow me," he said, holding the lantern aloft.

He threw the reins about his arm and strode bravely along, while Madame Danglars slowly walked behind.

As Jacob had said, the storm had decreased in intensity. A fine rain poured down, and the poor woman strode on with renewed courage.

Suddenly the storm cast a curiously formed thing at the feet of the pedestrians. Jacob picked it up and laughed loudly, as he put a convict's green cap, for such it was, upon his head.

"Almighty God!" exclaimed Madame Danglars in terror.

"Madame," said Jacob, confused, "I did not want to frighten you. I was only glad to see such a cap after so long a time."

"How did the cap get here?" asked Madame Danglars, excitedly.

"That is easy to say. A convict has thought fit to free himself from the kindly care of the Bagnio attend-

ants, and as the beautiful costume of the galley slaves is universally known, he has changed his toilet and thrown his cap, jacket and trousers to the winds."

Madame Danglars became excited, but she kept silent. They soon reached the house at Oliolles. The church bell of the village struck eight o'clock. Jacob went to the nearest inn, and, tying his horses to a tree, he entered the smoky little saloon, accompanied by his companion.

The innkeeper immediately hurried toward them, and while Madame Danglars ordered a glass of brandy for the coachman, the latter went to the kitchen to get the nails and cords he required to fix his broken axle. He threw the green cap carelessly on the table. Several people who sat there threw curious glances at the despised head-dress. Finally one of them said:

"Where did you get that pretty cap?"

"My coachman found it," said Madame Danglars softly.

"On the road?" exclaimed the men, rising as if electrified.

"We must hurry! Who is going along?"

"I—I!" came from all sides, and, as Madame Danglars looked from one to the other, the innkeeper said:

"There is a reward, madame, given by the city of Toulon for the capture of an escaped convict, and where a convict's cap is found they naturally conclude that the owner must be near at hand. At present wages are low, and one must not blame our peasants if they try to make something extra. I can guarantee you that the prisoner will be captured before two hours more have passed."

"The escaped convict cannot have been long in the Bagnio!" exclaimed a peasant looking closely at the cap. "The thing is almost new."

"Is there no name on the lining?" asked another.

"No, only a number—88!"

Madame Danglars gave a loud scream and with difficulty stammered:

"Show me the cap?"

Yes, there could be no doubt, the cap bore the number 88, the same which she had noticed on Benedetto's clothing. Had he escaped? And now these people wished to hunt him down like a wild animal, and he would not be able to hide from them.

"We must be going," said one of the peasants; "the convict cannot be far away, and who knows but we shall have luck and find two. It seldom happens that one escapes alone, the double chain is a good invention. Are you all ready?"

"Listen to me, gentlemen," said Madame Danglars firmly; "I will make you a proposition. Let the convict escape."

"And our hundred francs?"

"You will lose nothing! I will give you two hundred francs. It might be a humor, but I cannot reconcile myself to the thought of having a man pursued as if he were a wild animal."

The men looked up.

"The weather is terrible," said one.

"And a bird in the hand is worth two in a bush," said another.

"But we are three?" said the third, with a look of cupidity.

"You shall have three hundred francs, but let the convict escape."

"Good, madame! Your wish shall be fulfilled," said the men, after a pause; "but suppose he should be captured by some one else?"

"That cannot be helped," said Madame Danglars. "Who knows but what the poor fellow might get free this time. I saw the Bagnio to-day, and since then I am terribly nervous. It was frightful."

At this minute a shot was heard, and a firm voice cried:

"Help! help! Hold him!"

The innkeeper ran out, followed by the men. Madame Danglars crouched in a corner, and prayed to God to let her die before she should see her son.

The door was now torn open, and a great crowd entered the room.

"Forward, you horse thief," Jacob's rough voice was heard saying; "we just captured you in time."

A man whose face was covered with blood was pushed into the room. He fought desperately, throwing chairs and tables about, and falling flat on the ground.

"Let me alone," he cried, breathlessly. "I am tied already. I cannot escape."

Madame Danglars muttered a prayer of gratitude. No, that was not Benedetto's voice.

"Yes, we have got you," replied Jacob; "but the other one who took my horse has escaped! Would you believe it," he said, turning to the people, "that the other rascal ran off with my horse? While I was getting cord and nails I heard a noise in the courtyard. I ran to the spot, and saw two men getting on the backs of

my horses. Quick as thought I pulled out my pistol and fired. One of them fell, but before I could load again the other had disappeared! But I shall get him, and may God have mercy on him. Quick, a glass of brandy, and may the devil take him!"

While the people crowded about Jacob, Madame Danglars drew near to the convict.

"Did Benedetto accompany you?" asked Madame Danglars, softly.

Anselmo looked up surprised.

"Ha! the lady who gave me the letter for Benedetto," he murmured.—"Yes, Benedetto accompanied me."

"I want to save him; help me, and I will make you rich."

Lo! that was the lady with the million. Anselmo looked cautiously about, then whispered softly:

"Cut my cords. A knife lies over there."

Madame Danglars let her handkerchief fall on the table; when she picked it up she held a knife in her trembling hands; one cut and Anselmo was free. At the same moment she got up and stood in front of the door.

"Now, good-night," said Jacob, putting the empty glass down and drawing his pistol from his pocket.

At the same instant Anselmo sprang forward, and, seizing the pistol, he clutched Madame Danglars under the arm as if she were a child, and ran out of the room with her. Madame Danglars at once realized the situation. While Anselmo pressed against the door with all his strength, Madame Danglars, who was a splendid horsewoman, sprang into the saddle. Anselmo then let

go of the door, fired a shot into the crowd which surrounded him, and likewise bounded on to the back of the horse. The animal reared, but receiving a slight cut with the knife Madame Danglars still held in her hand, it flew like the wind, bearing the two far from their pursuers.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MOTHER

BENEDETTO, who had been told the way to Beaussuet by Anselmo, whipped his horse severely, making it fly over the stones and pavement. The vicarage was situated at the entrance to the village; the horse was covered with blood and foam, but Benedetto knew no mercy. Like a flash of lightning horse and rider flew along, and when the horse finally broke down, the first houses in the village had been reached.

Benedetto jumped off, but did not throw a look at the dying horse; he only thought of himself and his safety. He thought Anselmo had fallen into the hands of the people at Oliolles. That his companion would not betray him he knew, but the coachman had seen him and he would be pursued. There was no way out of it. He must get possession of the million, and then try to reach the coast.

Benedetto recognized the vicarage at the first glance, as his mother had described it accurately to him. An olive-tree stood inside the wall near the entrance. Benedetto took between his teeth the knife Anselmo had given him, and swung himself over the wall and thence on to the window-sill. The wretch hesitated a moment before he broke the pane. Suppose his mother uttered a cry.

"Ah, bah," he thought, "it will be her own fault."

With a quick movement he broke the glass.

Taking out a small thieves'-lantern and some matches, which Anselmo had also given him, he struck a light and looked around. The bed was empty.

"The mistral delayed her," muttered Benedetto; "I must be quick."

Hastily plunging his knife into the closet, he opened the door, and was soon in possession of the portfolio. He put it on the table and tried to open the lock with his knife. But in vain; it would not open.

At this moment his sharp ear detected the sound of horses' hoofs.

"The pursuers," he muttered, and for a moment he was dazed.

He collected himself rapidly. He did not wish to be caught, yet did not desire to lose the million. Taking the portfolio in his hand, he opened the window and was about to spring out when he paused. Unless he had the use of both of his hands, he could not hope to reach the wall, and he did not think of leaving his plunder behind him. Now he heard voices. His pursuers must have halted under the olive-tree; a horse whinnied, there was no chance of escape! He ran to the door. It was shut tight, and now it recurred to him that his mother had told him she carried the key in her pocket.

What was he to do? Alive he would not be captured, and the bandit who hesitated to draw his knife against his pursuers was a coward. He himself dreaded death, and he therefore carefully tried to remove the lock with his knife. Perhaps he could escape anyhow!

He had just removed two screws, when he heard heavy

steps coming up the stairs. His pursuers were at his heels.

With the portfolio under his arm and his knife held aloof in his hand, he waited. A key was inserted in the lock now, the door opened, and a figure entered the room.

But it did not proceed far. Benedetto's knife sank down and a hot stream of blood squirted into the face of the murderer, who had struck his victim in the breast. At the same moment Benedetto felt himself seized by a hand of iron and thrown down, while a well-known voice cried in his ear:

"Miserable scoundrel, it was your mother—your mother, and you knew it!"

The man who said this in a voice of thunder was none other than Anselmo, the galley slave, the ex-priest who had disgraced his cloth, but who was innocent in comparison to his comrade Benedetto.

He shook the Corsican like a madman, and continually repeated the words:

"Scoundrel! Murderer! Monster! It is your mother!"

Madame Danglars lay groaning on the floor, the knife was buried up to the hilt in her breast, and yet she did not utter a cry as she recognized her murderer. She restrained herself with superhuman power, fearing to give the alarm to Benedetto's pursuers.

"Benedetto," she faintly whispered, "you have killed me—but you did not know it was I, did you? Oh, sir," she added, turning to Anselmo, "leave him alone, he must escape—quick!"

Anselmo obeyed. During their desperate ride, he had been told by the poor mother what Benedetto was to her.

He knew Benedetto would go to the extreme, and his heart stopped beating as he thought of the unnatural son! He had urged the horse on at a wild gallop, so as to bring Benedetto's mother to the vicarage in safety. His own safety was of secondary importance to him, when it was a question of protecting a mother from the knife of her son. He intended to alarm the house; that Benedetto would arrive there before them he had not imagined.

"Sir," muttered the baroness, faintly, "swear to me that you will let Benedetto escape. Do not pursue him, and I die peacefully."

"I swear it," said Anselmo, in a hollow voice.

"Thanks, a thousand thanks! Benedetto, embrace me and fly."

The bandit stood as if transfixed, and gazed at the dying woman, and only when Anselmo touched him by the arm and drew him to the groaning woman, exclaiming: "Do as she says, or I will kill you," did he condescend to press his forehead to her cold lips.

"Benedetto," she whispered faintly.

Her breath ceased—she was dead.

"I have the million," said Benedetto, after a pause, "come!"

Instead of answering, Anselmo tore the knife from out of the breast of the dead woman and, holding it toward the son, hissed:

"Go, monster, or I shall break my oath and kill you."

Benedetto hesitated no longer, took the portfolio which lay on the floor, and bounded down the stairs.

CHAPTER XIX

ON THE SEA

SINCE that eventful evening at the vicarage of Beaussuet eight days have passed. On the evening of the eighth day a sharp northeast wind blew and whipped the waves of the Mediterranean Sea so violently that they rose mountain high and almost buried a small frigate under their white caps. The captain of the frigate stood at the helm and hoarsely roared out his commands to the sailors, but they did not understand him, and when the storm tore off the mainmast a loud outcry was heard. The captain was the only one who did not lose his senses. With his axe he chopped off the remaining pieces of the mast, and turning to his crew, his face convulsed with passion, he said:

"Thunder and lightning! what do you mean by disobeying my orders? Have you got cotton in your ears?"

"No, captain," replied the oldest sailor, "we do not disobey your orders, but why should we carry them out, since we are lost anyhow?"

As if in confirmation of his words a terrific wind threw the frigate on its side, and even the captain could hardly sustain himself on his feet.

"You are miserable cowards," he cried to the sailors; "one would imagine you had never seen a storm before! Do you still remember how the frigate was almost wrecked off Malta, and yet we saved our lives then?—"

"Yes, captain," interrupted a sailor, "but that was different."

"How so? What do you mean? Open your mouth, or—"

"That time we did not have any branded men on board," said the sailor, firmly.

"No branded men? Are you mad?"

"No, captain; but so long as we have these unhappy men on board the storm rages, and neither God nor the devil can save us. Look over there; there he lies on the floor, and, Jesus, Mary and Joseph!—another such a crash and we shall be food for the sharks!"

Unconsciously the captain looked in the direction indicated. A man, whose face could not be seen, lay flat on the vessel, his arms nervously clutching a package enveloped in a piece of sail-cloth. Now and then a tremor ran through his frame. He was apparently greatly frightened.

"What's the matter with the man?" asked the captain, gruffly.

"When he came on board at St. Tropez he was cov ered with blood, and—"

"Well, what then?"

"Well, his hair is shaved clean to the skin, as if he just came from the Bagnio."

"One would think," exclaimed the captain, loudly, "you are all saints. Do you remember, Pietro, what you had done before I shipped you?"

"Bah! I killed a Custom House officer, that is no crime."

"So, and what was the matter with you, Rosario?"

"Captain," answered Rosario, proudly, "you ought to know what a vendetta is."

"Didn't I say so? You are all as innocent as newborn babes. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

In spite of his apparent indifference, the captain felt inwardly uneasy, and the sailors' statements appeared to him to be well founded.

About four days before, as the frigate lay at anchor at St. Tropez, a man had approached the captain and offered him three thousand francs if he would take him along and land him on the Italian coast. Gennaro, the captain and owner of a smuggling vessel, did not hesitate long. Three thousand francs was a large sum, and as the passenger paid cash he overlooked certain things which he might otherwise have noticed. The closely shaved head pointed to a former galley slave, but as he conducted himself well on board and kept out of every one's way, the captain no longer thought about it.

The sailors, however, thought differently. With that superstition peculiar to Italians, they blamed the strange passenger for all the mishaps which had befallen the vessel since the "Shaven Redhead," as they called him, had come on board the vessel. On the first night a sudden storm carried away the rudder, on the second day one of the planks near the helm split, and the storm kept on increasing, finally reaching such a height that even Gennaro, the veteran sailor, could not remember to have ever seen one like it.

The boatswain now approached Gennaro.

"Well, Mello," said the captain, trying to appear indifferent, "do you also think the frigate is lost because the branded man is on board?"

"Yes," replied Mello, briefly, "if God does not perform a miracle."

At this moment a terrific crash was heard, and with loud cries the sailors rushed on deck.

"A waterspout; we are sinking!" they exclaimed, terror-stricken. "Help, captain, help!"

Immense waves of water poured over the deck and tore away part of the stern, making a deep hole in the frigate, which rapidly filled with water.

"To the pumps, men!" exclaimed Gennaro—"to the pumps!"

This time his command was immediately obeyed. The feeling of self-protection was stronger than their superstition, and the sailors were soon hard at work at the pumps.

Only two persons remained behind.

"Pietro," said one of them to the other, "are you anxious to swallow water?"

"*Corpo di Dio*, no!"

"How do you expect to save yourself?"

"Oh, there is still a remedy!"

The men exchanged knowing looks, and then one of them whispered:

"Be careful; do not let the captain hear of it; he might hinder us."

"He would be foolish enough to do so. We are heading straight for Elba, on the rocks of which we will be hopelessly dashed, if we do not take our steps beforehand. Let me attend to it as soon as she lies in the water."

As he said this, he looked toward the stranger, who was still lying motionless on the deck.

"Comrade," said Pietro to the stranger, "are you aware that we are sinking?"

A look of horror met the speaker, and then Benedetto, for it was he, said:

"Is there no rescue possible?"

"Oh, yes; with money you can do anything."

"Then rescue me, and I will pay you what you ask."

"Then listen. The frigate has but one boat. Follow us and make no noise. We will get into the boat and push off. For the rest, may God look out."

Benedetto nodded. When had he ever said no to any deviltry?

With staggering steps he followed the two sailors.

"Here!" exclaimed Pietro.

Benedetto could not see his hands before his eyes and blindly followed his guides. Suddenly he felt himself grasped by strong arms, and the next minute he was hurled headlong into the sea. The sailors had thrown him overboard to save the ship!

The package enveloped in sail cloth, and which contained his fortune, the wretch firmly clasped.

The waves threw him here and there. He lost consciousness. Suddenly he came to; a wave had thrown him upon a rock, and his forehead struck violently on a sharp stone. A dark stream of blood flowed over the pale face of the parricide, and heaving a deep sigh he lost consciousness anew.

CHAPTER XX

MONTE-CRISTO

THE storm had subsided and the stars shone clear and bright upon the softly rippling sea as a yacht plowed swiftly through the blue waters. A man enveloped in a long cloak leaned with folded arms against the railing and thoughtfully peered into the stream. He shuddered slightly as a small white hand was softly laid upon his arm. The next minute, however, he grasped the hand, pressed it to his lips, and gazed tenderly with his sparkling eyes, which shone like dark stars, upon a handsome young woman.

The young woman wore the costume of the inhabitants of Epirus; the fine white silk dress, which inclosed the slim, beautifully shaped form, looked like freshly fallen snow, and the embroidered flowers on her broad belt could hardly be distinguished from real plants.

"My darling," said the man softly, as he pressed a kiss upon the raven-black hair.

"Oh, how I love you, my friend, my husband," she whispered in the same tone.

"Did the storm frighten you, Haydee?" asked the man anxiously.

"I am never frightened when you are near me," the

pretty Greek laughingly replied; "you ought to know me better."

"Nature, Haydee, is sometimes stronger than the will of man."

"But God supervises the actions of nature, as he does the hearts of men," said Haydee, casting a look full of childish confidence at the starry sky.

"Are you aware, Haydee, that we shall reach our destination in an hour?"

"Yes, and when we land at Monte-Cristo you will tell me the story of your life, and I shall then find out the nature of the sorrow you have undergone."

"Haydee, the sorrow belongs to the past; the future at your side has in store for me only joy and happiness. From your pure lips the sentence, whether I am to be damned or saved, must come."

At this moment an old sailor approached them and in a tone of awe said:

"Count, are we going to Monte-Cristo?"

"Yes, Jacopo; you and your men stay on board, while Bertuccio and Ali accompany us. We shall only stay a few hours. Send Ali to me, and see to it that the yacht reaches its destination soon."

Jacopo bowed, and shortly afterward Ali appeared.

"Ali," said the count, turning to the Nubian, "have you carried out my orders?"

Ali folded his arms across his breast and nodded his head.

"And you know that your life is at stake?"

Ali again nodded.

"Good; you can go."

"You frighten me," said Haydee, clinging to the

count. "Ali is so devoted to you, and if we should lose him—"

"Have no fear, child; we will not lose him if he does his duty."

Like lightning the Ice Bird—for such was the name of the yacht—flew over the hot waves, which were bathed in the first rays of the morning sun, and soon the rude rocks of the island of Monte-Cristo were in view of the travellers. Haydee stood leaning against her husband's shoulder, and watched the play of the glistening waves, while before Monte-Cristo's eyes the past rose like a vision.

Ten years before, in February, 1829, Jacopo had taken him, who had passed fourteen long years in the Chateau d'If, into his service. Caderousse, Ferdinand, Danglars, and Villefort had been his enemies, and now justice had overtaken all of them. The treasure of the Abbe Faria had placed Edmond Dantes in a position to play an important part in the world as the Count of Monte-Cristo, and, now that he saw his plans realized, and the traitors punished, Monte-Cristo felt his soul stirred by doubts. Faria had intended to establish the unity of Italy with the legendary wealth of the Spadas. Later on he had given his treasure to Edmond Dantes to do with as he pleased; like the angel with the fiery sword, Monte-Cristo had punished the guilty, and now—

"Count," said Bertuccio, "we shall land directly. Have you any new order for me?"

"No, Bertuccio; you know my orders for Ali; they suffice."

Bertuccio departed, and immediately afterward the ship came to anchor.

The count laid his arm on the shoulder of the pretty Greek, and tenderly led her to the boat in waiting. Ali and Bertuccio followed, and the little vessel, driven by four strong oarsmen, flew like an arrow through the water.

The boat soon reached the beach, and Monte-Cristo carried Haydee in his arms to land. He motioned to Bertuccio and Ali, and, turning to the sailors, said:

"Come back for us in two hours."

The bark disappeared, and Monte-Cristo walked in the direction of the grotto. Haydee followed him, feeling as if she were entering some sanctuary, since it was at Monte-Cristo that she became the wife of the man whom she loved above everything else in the world.

The count divined the young woman's thoughts and drawing her toward him, he whispered: "My darling, at this place you became mine. To-day I wish to hear from your own lips whether I really deserve my happiness."

The subterranean palace housed the travellers. Fragrant perfumes filled the magnificent halls, and in the light of the wax candles the gold and silver service shone with fairy-like splendor.

Monte-Cristo conducted Haydee to a charming boudoir; her feet sank in wavy carpets, and after she had seated herself with incomparable grace on a divan, the count stood beside her and proceeded to relate the story of his life. It was a long time before he had finished his tale. Haydee felt with him the horrors of his prison, she sobbed as he described the death of Faria, whom he called his spiritual father, and cried out in terror as she heard that the cemetery of Chateau d'If was the wide

sea! Then he had dug out Faria's treasure. How rich he thought himself then, and how poor he was at the moment when he set foot on the land and heard that his father had died of starvation, and that Mercedes, his bride, had forgotten him and married the man who had betrayed him.

He had sworn then that he would revenge himself and punish all those who had sinned against him. Villefort, Caderousse, Danglars and Morcerf had succumbed to him, and he could now triumphantly exclaim: "I am your master; I have punished all of you as you have deserved."

"Haydee," said Monte-Cristo finally, "what is your decision?"

"That you have fulfilled the mission which God has placed in your hands according to his wish and desire. God was with you, for you have dealt out justice," exclaimed Haydee, her eyes sparkling.

"And now, Haydee—now—"

"Now justice is satisfied and you will become merciful," whispered the young woman softly.

"I wish to do so, Haydee, so help me God; for each act of revenge I will place a good deed in the eternal scales, and the years which still remain to me shall be devoted to the noblest aims of humanity. I—"

Suddenly Monte-Cristo paused, a slight motion from Ali showed that something unexpected had happened, and, hastily drawing Haydee with him, he left the grotto.

"What's the matter, Ali?" he asked, turning to the Nubian, who stood uneasily on a sharp ledge of the rock.

Ali threw himself at full length on the ground and closed his eyes.

"Ah!" exclaimed the count, "you have a man on this rock?"

Ali nodded gleefully.

"And do you know who he is?"

Ali's look expressed doubt. He put his hand to his forehead and shook his head to indicate that his memory had deserted him.

"Is the man wounded?"

"Yes," nodded Ali.

"Dead?"

"No," shaking his head.

"But he is not able to move?"

Ali's face lighted up again when he saw he was understood.

"Haydee," said the count, turning to his wife, "I look upon it as a good sign that God has permitted me at this minute to do an act of charity. Remain here, while I go with Ali to save the poor fellow."

"I shall accompany you," said Haydee, pleadingly; "let me take part in your good deeds."

"Then come, my darling," said Monte-Cristo, in whose eye a tear glistened, and they both followed Ali, who hurried toward the beach.

As they passed by the entrance to the grotto, Haydee noticed that Bertuccio was making a hole in the rock with his pickaxe.

"What is Bertuccio doing?" asked Haydee, curiously.

"You shall find out later on," replied the count, and, turning to Bertuccio, he asked in a low voice:

"Is the work nearly finished?"

"Almost, count. I have just one thing more to do, and as soon as you give the sign, all will be over."

"Very well, Bertuccio, and now follow us."

The Corsican looked wonderingly at the count, and, taking his pick in his hand, walked behind. When they had reached the rear part of the little island, Ali paused and pointed to a rock which projected into the sea.

Monte-Cristo's eyes followed the Nubian's direction, and he recognized a human body lying at full length upon a rock. The face was turned aside, and a dark pool of blood indicated a wound. The man's right hand convulsively clutched a package. With a bound Monte-Cristo had reached the side of the motionless man, and taking him in his strong arms, he carried him to a small grass plot and carefully laid him down.

"Ali," he ordered, "run to the grotto and get some rum. Do not lose a minute, it is a question of life and death."

The Nubian departed, and Monte-Cristo laid his hand upon the wounded man's breast.

"He still lives," he exclaimed, breathing more freely, "and with God's help we will save him."

Suddenly a terrible cry was heard behind him, and Bertuccio stammeringly exclaimed:

"Oh, sir, it is the wretch, the murderer! Do you not recognize him?"

The count bent over the wounded man, and washing the blood from his face he exclaimed in horror:

"Really, it is Benedetto!"

"Back, sir," cried Bertuccio in a rage, as he swung his pickaxe, "I will crush the viper's skull."

The pick cleaved through the air, but before it descended on Benedetto's head, the count had grasped it, and with a powerful movement hurled it into the sea.

"Bertuccio," he said coldly, "what right have you to play the judge in my presence?"

"Oh, sir, pardon. Anger overcame me. Benedetto burned Assunta, my sister-in-law and his foster mother, so as to get her money; he only lived from robbery and murder."

"He is a man, he must be saved."

Ali came now with the rum. The count poured a few drops into Benedetto's throat, Haydee rubbed his temples, and in a few minutes the wretch uttered a deep sigh and his lips moved, though his eyes still remained closed.

The count examined the wound.

"He will live," he said decisively. "The wound is not dangerous."

"It would be better for society if he died," hissed Bertuccio.

"Bertuccio," said the count sternly, "get some water and wash out this wound."

"But, count, I—"

"Yes, you! Either you obey, or we shall separate."

Bertuccio hurried away and soon returned with some water. He trembled with rage, as he washed Benedetto's wound, but he did not dare to say a word.

Haydee had in the meantime loosened a cord from the package and discovered a small oaken box, which she tried in vain to open. The count noticed it, and after he had carefully examined the lock, he murmured:

"I will try to open it with my key."

He really succeeded in doing it. The cover flew open, and the count could not repress a cry of surprise when he saw the pile of gold and bank-notes.

"Count," said Bertuccio, approaching, "he is opening his eyes."

"Did he recognize you?"

"Oh, no, he is still confused."

"So much the better. Keep yourself at a distance. He will recover."

"What is this?" exclaimed Bertuccio, catching a glimpse of the contents of the box. "It must be the spoils of some new robbery."

"Undoubtedly," said the count; "but, stay, there is a letter under these bank-notes which might clear up the mystery."

"My son," ran the letter, "I will send this letter to you on the eve of my departure from France. You have forgiven me. To-morrow I shall see you for the last time. May God be with you and place you under his protection. Your mother, H. D."

Monte-Cristo shuddered.

"Hermine Danglars," he muttered to himself. "Poor, poor woman!"

Shoving Bertuccio aside, he bent over Benedetto, and said, in a voice which penetrated the deepest depths of the soul:

"Benedetto, hear me!"

A shiver ran through the wretch, but the dark eyes remained closed.

"Benedetto," continued Monte-Cristo, sternly, "you have killed your mother. Shame upon you, parricide."

This time Benedetto opened his eyes in terror, and in a faint voice murmured:

"My mother! Yes, yes. Mercy!"

Monte-Cristo rose. His gaze met that of Bertuccio, in which he read a silent question.

"Are you still going to be charitable?" asked Bertuccio's eye. "The wretch has murdered the mother who bore him? Does he deserve mercy?"

Just then a merry sailor-song was heard. The bark of the Ice Bird appeared on the beach to fetch the passengers.

"Jacopo," exclaimed Monte-Cristo aloud, "listen!"

Jacopo stood up in the bark, and looked closely at the count, who called out some words in Maltese dialect to him.

Immediately a sailor jumped from the bark into the sea and swam toward the Ice Bird, while Jacopo with the two other sailors jumped on land.

"Bring some provisions from the grotto," ordered the count.

Jacopo and Ali did as they were told, and while the sailors carried the provisions to the bark, the count whispered a few words to the Nubian. Ali approached the wounded man, and, taking him in his strong arms, he carried him to the bark and placed him on the floor of the same. The count then took the box and threw it near Benedetto; he then took Haydee's arm in his own and went back with her, while Ali plunged into the water up to his waist and laid hold of the bark.

"Benedetto," cried the count aloud, "you have blasphemed God. You have trodden under foot all human and divine laws. Men cannot punish you; may God

weigh guilt and punishment with each other! Ali, do your duty."

Ali, with a powerful movement, pushed the bark from the shore. The tide seized the light vessel, and in a short while it disappeared from the horizon.

"Oh, count," stammered Bertuccio, beside himself, "you have given him his life."

"If Almighty God wishes him to be saved, let it be so. He has the right to punish and forgive," replied the count, solemnly.

The yacht was now approaching the shore, in obedience to the command the sailor had brought, and, with Haydee and the seaman, the count got on board, and solemnly said:

"Bertuccio and Ali, do your duty!"

Haydee looked wonderingly at her husband; he took her head in his hands and earnestly said:

"My darling, I bury the past at this hour—the grottoes of Monte-Cristo are no more."

A column of fire rose from the island—a loud report was heard, and the treasure chamber of the Cardinal Spada was annihilated.

Ali and Bertuccio hurried to the yacht, and the Ice Bird flew with all sails toward the open sea.

"Oh, darling," whispered Haydee, blushing deeply, "you have been merciful, and I thank you doubly for it. What you do for your fellow-men God will return to your child. Yes, I speak the truth. God has given me the great happiness to become a mother. Kiss me, my beloved."

CHAPTER XXI

WITH THE PANDURS

IN THE forties, Signora Aurora Ventelli was the owner of a place near the Scala, at Milan, called the Casino. The Casino was the meeting-place of the Austrian officers, for at that time the old Lombardian city was garrisoned by Austrians, under the special command of Marshal Radetzky.

Count Joseph Wenzel Radetzky is a celebrated historical personage, and the words of a contemporary: "Radetzky is a great hunter before the Lord; he drives the people before him like the hunter game," describe him sufficiently. If Radetzky was a tyrant, his officers were a torture to Italy, and it often happened that the Bohemian and Croatian officers whipped women and children on the open streets, or else ran a dagger through the body of some peaceful citizen.

Aurora Ventelli, however, enjoyed the protection of the Austrian police! What the services were that she rendered the State is not known; but, nevertheless, the "handsome Aurora," as she was called, was in great favor at police headquarters. The eating at the Casino was celebrated, the wines were second to none, and dice

and cards were provided for the "spiritual" amusement of the guests.

An Italian was seldom seen in the Casino, and those that came were generally those who had taken to the Austrian army.

On the night of the 15th to the 16th of March, 1848, lively scenes were being enacted in the Casino, and neither Aurora Ventelli herself nor old Major Bartolomeo Batto, who was one of the regular customers at the place, could restrain the excited guests.

"What is going on at Vienna, Lieutenant Pasky?" asked a young officer. "Have the riots there any importance?"

"No, thank God," replied the lieutenant; "the *canaille* will soon be brought to their senses."

"H'm, if the emperor would only be strict," said another.

"Ah, bah! the mob has no importance."

"And the cannons generally prove it."

"Comrades," said an elderly officer, approaching the group, "I think the affair is serious."

"How so? What has happened?"

"Well, the emperor has made concessions."

"But that would be a shame."

"They want to repeal the censorship—"

"That's good. The newspapers could then print what they pleased."

"The new press-bill is said to be very liberal."

"A bullet and a rope are the best laws."

"Besides that, the delegates of the German kingdom and the Lombardian-Venetian kingdom are going to be called in—"

A storm of anger rose, and a rough Austrian nobleman, Hermann von Kirchstein, passionately exclaimed:

"Comrades, the emperor can do what he wishes, but we shall do what we wish, and if the Italians make a move we shall crush them."

As if to add strength to his words, Herr von Kirchstein crushed the wineglass he held in his hand, amid the applause of his comrades.

"Bravo!" they cried.

Count Hermann looked proudly about and said:

"Only as late as yesterday I had an opportunity to show the Milanese who is master here."

"Tell us, comrade; tell us all about it," came from all sides.

"Well, last evening, about six o'clock, I was going across the Piazza Fontana, when two confounded Italians —a lady about forty years of age, dressed in deep mourning, and a young sixteen-year-old boy—approached me. They took one side of the pavement and did not stir to let me pass. I was walking along smoking a cigar, and did not look up; the lady did not move, and you can understand—"

The count made a gesture signifying that the lady had lost her balance, and, amid the coarse laughter of his comrades, he continued:

"I went ahead, but the young booby ran after me, cursed me, and tore my cigar out of my mouth. I drew my sword, but the woman clutched my arm and cried: 'You killed the father on the 3d of January, on the Corsa dei Servi—spare the son.'

"With my sword," continued Count Hermann, "I struck the woman over the hands until she let go

of my arm, and then I broke the young fellow's skull. The people crowded around, and the police arrived, to whom I told the affair."

"Did the dastardly wretch lie dead on the ground?" asked a young officer.

"No, the police took him away; but after the explanations I gave, I think he must be tried at once; in urgent cases a criminal can be hanged inside of twenty-four hours."

"Antonio Balbini was strangled this morning, and nailed to the wall of the prison," said a deep voice, suddenly.

Every one turned toward the speaker, who continued in a calm voice:

"As I tell you, Count Hermann—nailed to the wall. Ah, we have splendid methods here to humiliate the mob. About eight days ago two traitors were fried in hot oil, and if they are to be buried alive *a la proviguere*—"

"What is that?" asked a captain, sipping sorbet.

"What? You don't know what that is?" said the first speaker, in hard metallic tones. "One would think you had just come from another world."

The speaker was an Italian, about thirty years of age, of extraordinary beauty. Deep black, sparkling eyes lighted up the finely-chiselled features, and perfect white teeth looked from under the fresh rosy lips and raven black mustache.

The Marquis Aslitta was since two months in Milan, and, as was said, had formerly lived at Naples. He carefully refrained from meeting his countrymen, and appeared to be a faithful servant of foreign tyrants.

While he spoke the officers appeared to feel uncomfortable, and if they laughed, it sounded forced and unnatural.

"To come back to the *proviguere*," said Aslitta, laughing loudly. "The prisoners are chained, their legs are broken, and they are hurled head foremost into a pit about four feet deep. Then the pit is filled with dirt, leaving the legs exposed up to the knees. It recalls little trees and looks comical."

Aslitta laughed again; but, singular thing, the laugh sounded like long-drawn sobs.

Count Hermann felt his hair stand on end.

"Let us play cards," he proposed; but before his comrades could say anything, a thunderous noise came from the direction of the Scala, mingled with loud cries.

"Long live La Luciola! Long live Italy!"

The officers hurried out. As soon as the hall was cleared, Aslitta strode toward Major Bartolomeo, and whispered in his ear:

"To-night in the little house on the Porta Tessina."

CHAPTER XXII

THE QUEEN OF FLOWERS

THE Italians have always been born musicians, and in Milan, too, there are plenty of artists. Among the latter, Maestro Ticellini occupied the first place. He had a great deal of talent, wrote charming cavatinas, and his songs were much sought after. He had not composed an opera as yet; and what was the cause of this? Simply because he could find no fitting libretto; the strict censorship always had something to say, and the most innocent verses were looked upon as an insult to his majesty, the emperor.

Since a few weeks Ticellini was in a state of great excitement. Salvani, the impresario of the Scala and a friend of Ticellini, had engaged La Luciola, the star of the opera at Naples, for Milan, and the maestro had not been able to find a libretto.

Dozens of text books had been sent back by the censor; the subjects out of the old and new history were looked down upon, because in all of them allusions were made to tyrants and oppressed people, and while La Luciola achieved triumphs each evening in the operas of Bellini and Donizetti, Ticellini grew desperate.

One night as he returned to his home in the Via de

Monte an unexpected surprise awaited him. His faithful servant stood in front of the door and triumphantly waved a roll of paper before his eyes. Ticellini indifferently unrolled the package, but suddenly he broke into a cry of joy. He held a libretto in his trembling hands.

Shutting himself in his room, Ticellini flew over the manuscript. He did not notice that the binding which held the libretto was tricolored. And yet they were the Italian colors, white, green and red, the tricolor which was looked down upon.

The title already pleased the maestro. It was "The Queen of Flowers." The verses were very lucid and melodious, and the subject agreeable. The queen of flowers was the rose, which loved a pink, whereas the pink was enamored of a daisy. After many entanglings the allegory closed with the union of the pink and the daisy, and the rose generously blessed the bond. All was joy and happiness, and as soon as Ticellini had finished reading, he began to compose.

The part of the daisy was made for the high soprano of La Luciola, the pink must be sung by Signor Tino, the celebrated baritone, and Signora Ronita, the famous contralto, would secure triumphs as the rose. The subordinate characters were soon filled, and the next morning, when Ticellini breathlessly hurried to Salvani, he was in a position to lay the outline of the opera before him.

Salvani, of course, was at first distrustful, but after he assured himself that there was nothing treasonable in it, he put the manuscript in his pocket and went to see the censor.

The censor received Salvani cordially, and taking his

ominous red pencil in his hand, he glanced over the libretto. But no matter how much he sought, he could not find a single libellous sentence, and at the end of an hour Salvani was able to bring his friend the news that the performance of the opera was allowed.

Ticellini was overjoyed; he worked night and day, and at the end of a week he appeared before Salvani, waving the completed score triumphantly in the air.

While the two friends were sitting at the piano, and Ticellini marked several songs and duets, a knock was heard.

"No one can enter," said Salvani, springing up; "we wish to be alone."

"Oh, how polite!" exclaimed a clear, bright voice, and as Salvani and Ticellini looked up in surprise they uttered a cry of astonishment:

"Luciola!"

La Luciola was very beautiful. She was slim and tall, about twenty-seven years of age, with beautiful black hair and finely-formed features. Her almond-shaped eyes were likewise dark, but had a phosphorescent gleam, which gave her the name of Luciola, or the fire-fly. She was dressed in a red satin dress, and wore a jaunty black felt hat. There was quite a romantic legend connected with the pretty girl: no one knew from what country she came, since she spoke all the European tongues with equal facility, and steadfastly refused to say a word about the land of her birth. She possessed the elegance of a Parisian, the grace of a Creole, and the vivacity of an Italian. Her real name was unknown. She was called the heroine of several romantic adventures, though no one could say which one of her numerous

admirers she preferred. La Luciola appeared to have no heart.

Very often La Luciola, dressed in men's clothes, would cross the Neapolitan plains, accompanied by her only friend, a tender, tall blonde. The latter was just as modest as La Luciola was audacious, and she clung to the proud Amazon like the ivy to the oak.

A few days before her departure from Naples, a Croatian officer had insulted her, and instead of asking a gentleman of her acquaintance to revenge the coarse remark, she herself sought the ruffian, dressed in men's clothes, and boxed his ears as he sat in a café. Amid the laughter of his comrades the officer left the café, and La Luciola triumphed.

Such was the person upon whom the fate of the new opera depended, for she reigned supreme at the Scala, and Salvani as well as Ticellini knew this.

While they were both meditating how to secure the Luciola in the easiest way, the songstress said:

"My visit seems to be unwelcome to the gentlemen?"

"Unwelcome?" repeated Salvani. "Signora, what are you thinking of? On the contrary, we were just speaking about you and wishing you were here."

"Flatterer," said La Luciola, laughing, and pointing her finger warningly at him.

"No, signora, Salvani says the truth," Ticellini said, earnestly. "We wish to ask a great favor of you."

"That is excellent. I also come to ask for a favor," replied the diva, springing up hurriedly. "You speak first, and then you shall hear what brought me to your office."

"Oh, signora," said Ticellini, crossing his hands and falling on one knee, "my fate lies in your hands."

"That sounds quite tragical! One would imagine I was Marshal Radetzky. But are you ever going to tell me what is the matter?"

"We—I—" began Salvani, stammering.

"My dear impresario," interrupted La Luciola, laughing, "let us make short work of it. I will tell you why I came, and, in the meantime, you can collect your thoughts. Well, then, I am growing tired at La Scala; Donizetti, Bellini, and whatever other names your great composers bear, are very good fellows, but, you know, *toujours perdrix.*"

"Well—and—" asked Salvani, breathlessly, as the diva paused.

"Well, I must have a new *rôle* in a new opera or I shall run away," said La Luciola, firmly.

Both men uttered a cry of joy. Luciola looked from one to the other and finally said:

"Does my demand embarrass you?"

"No, luck alone makes us dumb. We intended, signora, to ask you to-day to take a part in a new opera."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed La Luciola, clapping her hands with joy. "Who is the composer of the new opera? Gioberto, Palmerelli, or perhaps you, Ticellini? But stay! before we go any further, I make one condition: the subject must not be tragical."

"Oh, tragic opera has long since gone out of fashion."

"Thank God, you have the same opinion as I. What I should like now would be a spectacular piece, an allegory or something like it—pretty music and bright verses."

"Oh, signora!" exclaimed Ticellini, joyfully, "I have got what you want. The new opera is called the 'Queen of Flowers.'"

"What a pretty title!"

"Your part will be that of the daisy."

"Beautiful, beautiful!"

"Permit me to play you the first cavatina.'

Ticellini hurried to the piano and began to play.

Luciola listened attentively and nodded satisfaction as Ticellini sung the verses.

"That will do," she said. "Get everything ready for the rehearsals; I shall sing the part."

She went out, and the next day the rehearsals began for the new opera, the first performance of which was to take place on the 15th of May, 1848.

CHAPTER XXIII

GREEN, WHITE AND RED

THE night of the 15th of May arrived, and both Salvani and Ticellini were very nervous about the first performance of the "Queen of Flowers." La Luciola was certainly the pet of the public, but the situation at Milan was such that it was a question whether the performance at the Scala would receive any attention. Even the day before, there had been very little call for tickets, and Salvani, who had spared no expense to mount the new opera properly, had awful dreams on the night of the 14th about deficits and bankruptcy.

At length, on the morning of the 15th, the demand became heavier, and after a few boxes had been taken, a negro appeared at the box-office about eleven o'clock, and pointed at a pack of tickets.

"Ah—your master desires a box?" asked Salvani, who did not disdain on special days to take charge of the box-office.

The negro laughed, so that the impresario could wonder at his white teeth, and shook his head, pointing once more at the tickets.

"You want two boxes, perhaps?"

Again the negro shook his head.

"Three boxes?"

"No."

"My God, are you dumb?"

An expressive look from the Nubian confirmed the insinuation. He put a roll of bank-notes on the package, and made a motion as if he wished to put the latter in his pocket.

"Do you want to buy the whole package?" asked Salvani, breathlessly.

"Yes," nodded the negro.

The impresario looked doubtingly at him, and said:

"But that is eleven boxes on the first tier, each of which costs fifty lire—"

"Yes."

"Twenty-two boxes on the third tier, at thirty-six lire; and all the boxes on the fourth tier, thirty boxes at twenty-five lire."

Again the Nubian nodded. Salvani began to reckon, and excitedly exclaimed:

"But that is impossible. Are you aware that this is a matter of 2,848 lire?"

Without hesitating, the negro laid the sum of 3,000 lire in bank-notes on the window and put the tickets in his pocket. Thereupon he drew his arm under that of the impresario and pointed to the stage.

"I do not understand," stammered Salvani. "You want to go on the stage?"

"Yes."

"Then follow me."

Salvani walked down a small stairway and soon stood, with the negro, on the dimly lighted stage. The Nubian walked in front of the prompter's box and pointed so

expressively toward the parterre and the parquet, that the impresario at once knew what he wanted.

"You want to buy the rest of the seats unsold?" he hastily asked.

"Yes."

"The places cost originally five, four and three lire."

"Yes."

"Well, I would be a fool if I did not take a hand in."

Before the Nubian had departed, he had purchased all of the seats still to be had, for the round sum of 6,000 lire, and with head proudly erect he strode through the streets.

When Ticellini appeared, Salvani triumphantly pointed to the pile of bank-notes, and when the maestro anxiously remarked that he thought it must be a trick of one of his rivals to ruin him, the impresario coolly said:

"Ticellini, would you be able to raise 6,000 lire to annihilate Gioberto and Palmerelli?"

The composer was silent. This kind of logic convinced him.

When the eventful evening came, the Scala looked magnificent.

For the first time since the Austrian occupation, all the aristocratic ladies appeared in full dress. Salvani, as well as the maestro, looked wonderingly at the audience. Very soon, however, their wonder changed to curiosity, for the toilets of the ladies were arranged in a peculiar way. Some were dressed entirely in green satin, with green leaves in their hair; others wore red satin, with red roses, and others again white satin and

white flowers; and then the ladies were grouped together in such a way that the tricolor green, white and red always appeared. Ticellini was a patriot from head to foot, and his heart beat loudly when he saw the Italian tricolor.

What could it all mean? A revolution? That would destroy all chances of the success of his opera, but Ticellini did not think of himself, when the fatherland was in question, and he enthusiastically hummed the first lines of the national hymn:

"*Chi per la patria muore*
Vessuto ha assai!"

(He who has died for his country has lived long enough.)

The parquet and balcony were filled with students, and only one proscenium box was still empty.

A murmur ran through the theatre; the door of the proscenium box was opened and three persons entered it.

A tall, majestic man, whose dark locks inclosed a pale face, led a lady of extraordinary beauty. He was dressed in a frock suit, the lady in purple silk, with a white sash. A diadem of sparkling emeralds ornamented the finely shaped head, and on her neck and arms diamonds of the purest water shone.

A remarkably handsome child, a boy about eight or nine years, took a seat between the lady and gentleman, and it only needed a casual look upon the features of the youth to recognize him as the son of the pair. The box just opposite to them was Radetzky's, and was occupied by his adjutant. Observant of everything which looked like a manifestation or a demonstration, they

threw threatening glances at the color constellation, and the confidant of Radetzky immediately sent for Salvani.

The impresario appeared, excited and trembling. Suppose the adjutant should forbid the performance?

"What does this mean?" the officer angrily exclaimed. "Have you noticed the three colors?"

"Your Excellency, I—"

"Well, are you going to answer me?"

"Will your excellency condescend to take a look over the house—"

At the same moment, as Salvani had entered the box, the gentleman in the opposite box had arisen and placed a light blue band over the lady's shoulders. Simultaneously all the other ladies in the house threw sashes over their shoulders; yellow, blue, black, and brown were the colors which met the astonished gaze of the adjutant, and he grumblingly said:

"Wait, *canaille*, I will not be deceived."

Salvani had hurriedly left. The first notes of the overture ran through the house, and loud applause was heard. This time, too, the gentleman in the proscenium box gave the signal for the applause, but no one appeared to notice it.

Ticellini hurried to La Luciola's dressing-room. The diva was already dressed for her part, and looked so transcendently beautiful that the maestro held his breath.

"Well, maestro," said the diva, laughing, "do I please you, and do you think the opera will be a success?"

"Oh, signora, I have never doubted it, since you consented to take the part of Marguerite."

A dark form came from the rear of the dressing-room, and the Marquis Aslitta went toward Ticellini.

"Let me congratulate you, maestro," he cordially said, offering Ticellini his hand.

Ticellini hesitated before he took it. Aslitta was looked upon in Milan as a renegade, and therefore Ticellini was very glad when he was called away. Bidding good-by to the diva, he hurried back to the stage, and Aslitta remained alone with Luciola.

"Giorgio," whispered Luciola, giving the marquis her hand, "the eventful hour has arrived."

"Thanks, my darling," murmured the young man; "you are staking your existence to save my country—a whole life would not suffice to reward you."

Luciola threw herself into the outstretched arms of Aslitta.

"You love me, Giorgio?"

"Dearly; you are my goddess, my all."

"Oh, Giorgio; nothing shall be too difficult for me to do for you. But go now, the time has come."

"And you have forgotten nothing, and will observe the sign?"

"Be easy, I will think of everything."

"Then farewell; have courage."

"And hope," added Luciola, kissing Aslitta.

At this moment a heavy hand was laid upon Aslitta's shoulder, and a clear voice said:

"Marquis, you should have closed the door."

Aslitta turned hurriedly about. A man stood in front of him, whose appearance was very repulsive.

Count San Pietro had short, red-brown hair, and one of his eyes was always closed; a deep blue scar, reach-

ing from the eye to the left ear, disfigured his otherwise handsome face in a horrible manner. A diabolical smile played upon his lips, and Aslitta grew pale as he recognized the count.

La Luciola, measuring the count with a stern look, said:

"Count, by what right have you come here?"

A malicious smile was the answer, and then San Pietro audaciously said:

"Who will prevent me from coming in?"

"I!" exclaimed Luciola, passionately. "Depart at once."

"Ah, you are defending the marquis."

Aslitta was moved to become angry, but he restrained himself, and laughingly said:

"Why should not others have the right to admire La Luciola?"

The diva trembled, but a look from Aslitta gave her courage, and, trying to appear cool, she said:

"Really, count, you frightened me; I hardly recognized you."

"And the marquis has no need to hide; he can leave that to the conspirators," remarked the count, with a piercing look.

Aslitta met the gaze fearlessly, and indifferently answered, evading the question:

"Count, have you a box for to-night's performance?"

"No, every place was taken when my servant went to the box-office."

"Then do me the honor to take a seat in my box."

"Ah, you were more fortunate than I."

The manager opened the door leading to the stage-row, and exclaimed:

"Signora, your scene begins."

"I am coming," said Luciola, and, passing by the gentlemen, she laughingly said:

"Good-by, and do not forget to applaud."

As soon as she had gone, the gentlemen went toward the auditorium, and on the stairs leading to the boxes Pietro paused and hissed:

"Marquis, you know I shall kill you the first chance I have."

"Really?" asked Aslitta; "have you become so blood-thirsty all of a sudden?"

"No evasions," replied the count. "You love Luciola?"

"Why not?"

"And Luciola loves you?"

"I am not vain enough to imagine your statement to be true."

"Beware, marquis," said the count; "I have eyes."

"So much the better for you."

"And in the dungeons of Milan there are cells, in which patriots are broken on the wheel and forced to name their accomplices—"

"Count," interrupted Aslitta, "there are also dark places in Milan, where Italians who betray their country to the oppressor are shot."

Stepping into his box, Aslitta closed the door in the count's face, and San Pietro was forced to go to the marshal's box.

As San Pietro took his place, La Luciola just ap-

peared on the scene; deafening applause greeted her, and she gratefully bowed.

"Colonel," said San Pietro, turning to the adjutant, "I have to give you the name of a traitor."

"But not now," said the colonel, impatiently; "just listen to that beautiful duet."

The duet between the rose and the daisy was magnificently sung. No one noticed, however, that Luciola threw a look at the gentleman in the proscenium box, directing his attention to that occupied by Radetzky's adjutant. The unknown arose, and cast his sparkling eyes at San Pietro. He then looked down at the stage again, and La Luciola laughed with satisfaction. The duet finished amid applause.

"Colonel," repeated the count again, "Aslitta conspires with the patriots, and—"

"To-morrow—to-morrow, count."

"To-morrow would be too late."

"Then, in the devil's name, speak now and be done with it. What do you wish?"

"That Aslitta be arrested this evening."

"Ah, La Luciola is divine; we must secure her for Vienna!" exclaimed the colonel, enthusiastically. "Will you arrange it?"

"What, your excellency?"

"Are you deaf? We must secure Luciola for Vienna."

"Have Aslitta arrested, and La Luciola will be a member of the Vienna Opera."

"Stupid, what interest has La Luciola in Aslitta?"

"She loves him," hissed the count.

"What! La Luciola disdains our advances, and falls in love with this Neapolitan! That is treason."

"Then your excellency—"

"I give you *carte blanche*; bring Aslitta to the citadel, but not before the close of the performance; I wish to hear the opera to the end."

The adjutant tore a piece of paper from a note-book, wrote a few lines upon it and gave it to San Pietro. The count gave a diabolical laugh. His course was easy now.

As much as San Pietro had tried, he could not remember whom La Luciola looked like. Thanks to his wound, a blank had occurred in his memory, and certain episodes of his former life were covered with a heavy veil. As he now threw a glance at the opposite box, a part of this veil was torn asunder, and like a dazed person he looked at the gentleman dressed in black. The latter transfixed him likewise. Instinctively the count coughed and hid his face in his handkerchief. He could not meet the gaze of those coal-black eyes.

"No, no," he muttered, anxiously. "No one knows my former name; I would be a fool to get frightened."

As soon as the first act was over, San Pietro turned to an officer and said:

"Do you know the gentleman sitting in the opposite box?"

"Not personally, but from reputation. He is said to be enormously rich."

"What is his name?"

"The Count of Monte-Cristo; his wife, who is sitting next to him, is wonderfully handsome; they say she is a Greek. The pretty boy is their son."

"Thanks," said San Pietro; and then he muttered to

himself: "'Tis he; he has a son! This time he will not escape me."

"Do you know the count's political opinions?" said San Pietro, after a pause.

"I only know that immediately after the gentleman's arrival from Naples he sent his negro with his card to Radetzky, asking the marshal to allow him to pay his respects to him."

"That is decisive."

The opera had in the meantime been proceeded with; when the third act began a messenger appeared with an order which called the adjutant to the marshal's house. What could the officers do? The service went before everything else, and they disappeared just as La Luciola, Ruinta, and Signor Tino were singing a beautiful trio.

At length the last scene came; the rose, the proud queen of flowers, assented to the marriage of the pink and the daisy, and a bower of green vines was raised before an altar constructed of evergreens.

Red, white and green! The national colors!

At this moment Monte-Cristo arose and gave the signal. Immediately every one rose and clapped their hands, and he joyously exclaimed:

"Long live Italy! Long live the national flag!"

And then a loud voice thundered above the tumult:

"*Fuori i barbari!* Away with the foreigners!"

The next minute the students climbed on to the stage and divided the palms. A roar of a thousand voices was heard singing the national hymn:

"*Chi per la patria muore*
Vessuto ha assai?"

La Luciola was carried in triumph to her coach by the students; the enthusiastic young men took the horses out of the traces and bore the carriage along themselves, shouting through the night air:

"Long live La Luciola! Long live Italy!"

CHAPTER XXIV

A FIGHT IN THE STREETS

WHEN the Major von Kirchstein and his comrades, attracted by the noise, rushed out into the street, they saw La Luciola's carriage covered with flags bearing the national colors; the diva and her friend were seated therein, and La Luciola enthusiastically cried:

"Oh, Milla, Milla, this is great and sublime!"

"Comrades!" shouted the major in a rage, "follow me. We will capture La Luciola, and bring her to the citadel!"

Loud applause greeted the major's words, but before he had reached the coach a hand grasped him by the throat, and a hoarse voice cried in his ear:

"If you touch a hair of La Luciola's head, you are a dead man."

It was Aslitta. Our readers have already guessed that the marquis was playing the part of a Brutus, and La Luciola, who loved him dearly, supported him in his plans. The two fiery natures had become acquainted at Naples. Luciola's friend, the gentle Milla, had written the mysterious libretto and Aslitta had sent it to

Ticellini. Edmond Dantes had kept the oath he made upon Monte-Cristo, to be the warm friend of the oppressed. He was an admirer of Aslitta, and placed himself at his service and the cause he represented.

Up till now he had never met La Luciola, but when the diva saw at the Scala that evening the man whom her lover had talked to her about, she was seized with a deep emotion. Yes, she recognized and knew the man who took up the cause of Italy's misery, and had confidence in his ability to carry out whatever project he undertook.

As the major uttered the threat against La Luciola, Aslitta recognized the danger his love was in. He had already grasped the coach door with his hand, when he felt himself seized by strong arms and borne to the ground. A well-known voice hissed in his ear—the voice of San Pietro:

"We have got you."

A gag was inserted between Aslitta's lips, his arms and limbs were bound, and two pandours dragged him away, while the count said:

"You know the order; take good care of him! You must answer for the prisoner with your life."

One of the pandours pressed the muzzle of his gun against Aslitta's forehead and threateningly said:

"Do not stir or I will blow your brains out."

Aslitta was obliged to obey. The carriage in which he had been placed stopped, the marquis was lifted out, and the doors of a subterranean dungeon closed behind him.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MASKS FALL

WHEN the hated Austrian uniforms appeared in the brilliantly lighted streets, a threatening noise was uttered by the mob, and the students who surrounded Luciola's carriage threw themselves upon the officers.

It was a foolish beginning, for they had no weapons —they only possessed burning patriotism, and their hatred of the foreign oppressor.

A shot now fell, and at the same time the tall form of Count San Pietro loomed up, giving commands to the soldiers to make the attack—an attack against a defenceless crowd of human beings. As soon as the students heard the shot, they surrounded the carriage of the diva again. The latter tried to encourage the trembling Milla. As for herself, she had no fear, and though she could not understand Aslitta's absence, she was far from imagining the truth.

Suddenly San Pietro's repulsive features appeared at the carriage window, and Luciola's heart ceased beating.

Had he betrayed Aslitta?

The count had arranged things well. Narrower and

narrower grew the circle about the patriots, and the students tried in vain to draw the carriage away from the soldiers.

"Luciola," said the count, maliciously, "do you still think you can escape me?"

Luciola drew herself up, and casting a look of contempt at the count, she cried, in loud, clear tones:

"Miserable coward!"

San Pietro uttered a cry of rage, and lifted his sword aloof.

Luciola looked coolly at him; not a muscle of her fine face quivered, but her hand grasped the jewelled hilt of a dagger.

She did not intend to fall into the villain's hands alive.

Suddenly, above the roar of the multitude, a voice thundered:

"Benedetto! Murderer! Escaped galley slave—beware! God cannot be mocked at! Shame over you!"

And as these words were heard, Count San Pietro, the favorite of Radetzky, tremblingly looked in the direction from whence the words came, and which sounded to him like the call of the judgment day. On the pedestal of a marble statue opposite to him stood the man he had recognized at the Scala, who pointed threateningly at him, and Benedetto, wild with rage, pulled a pistol from his pocket and fired at Monte-Cristo. When the smoke cleared away, Monte-Cristo still stood there; at the same time the crowd separated in the centre, and two harnessed horses were shoved in front of Luciola's carriage. How it happened no one knew—in an instant the traces were fastened to the shafts, the negro who sat

on the box whipped up the horses, and in a second the carriage rolled away.

The shots fired after them did not reach them, and in a few minutes they had disappeared.

"Death and thunder," hissed Benedetto, "this one at least shall not escape me"; and foaming with rage, he threw himself upon the count.

The latter let him come. Benedetto put the muzzle of his pistol to the count's breast, but at the same moment the iron arm of the latter had clutched the scoundrel by the throat, and with a hoarse laugh Benedetto let his weapon fall and sank upon his knees. Quick as thought the count seized the weapon, and placing it against Benedetto's forehead, said in a loud, clear voice:

"All you people who are with this villain whom you call Count San Pietro ought, at least, to know whom your ally is. Listen attentively, gentlemen. The man to whom you bend the knee is an escaped galley slave —he murdered his mother!"

A cry of horror came from the lips of the crowd, and the Croatians, whose roughness was proverbial, turned with horror from the scoundrel.

Monte-Cristo threw the pistol on the ground, and, getting down from the pedestal, he walked slowly through the lines of the retreating soldiers.

As soon as Benedetto felt himself free he sprang up, and, turning to the crowd, he hissed:

"Do not believe him, he lied; he is an enemy of Austria! How will you be able to look Marshal Radetzky in the face, if you allow him to escape?"

The name of Radetzky acted like magic upon the

soldiers. They turned pale and rushed in pursuit of Monte-Cristo.

They had caught up to the count, when he suddenly vanished from their gaze. To the bystanders it seemed as if a wall had opened to give him protection.

But soon the riddle was solved. The wall through which the Count of Monte-Cristo had escaped belonged to the Vertelli house, and all the officers knew that the building contained several secret passages.

"Follow me," said Benedetto, angrily, entering the Casino.

On the threshold Major Bartolomeo met him. Benedetto grasped the old veteran by the throat, and shaking him like a leaf, he exclaimed:

"Wretch, you have betrayed us; but you shall pay for it!"

"I," stammered the major, "I—am—innocent."

"Oh, no deception. I know you. How long is it since you called yourself Cavalcanti, and played the part of my father? Come, men, take this man prisoner. I will report to the marshal about it."

CHAPTER XXVI

LOVE OF COUNTRY

LED by Ali's strong hands the noble steeds flew along the streets of Milan like the wind. La Luciola appeared now to have changed roles with Milla, for she wept bitterly.

"Oh, Milla," groaned the diva, "Aslitta is surely dead, or else he would have kept his word, and if I have lost him my life will be at an end."

"But, Eugenie," consoled Milla, "why fear the worst always? I—"

The sudden stoppage of the coach caused Milla to pause. The negro sprang from the box, opened the door and motioned with his hand to the ladies to descend.

"Come, Milla," said La Luciola, "wherever we are, we are under the protection of a powerful friend."

They were ushered into a beautifully furnished hallway, which led to a room furnished with heavy velvet draperies. A man with gray hair and aquiline nose, our old friend Bertuccio, received the ladies with a deep bow.

"Signora," he said, turning to Luciola, "have no fear; you are in the house of a friend. Follow me."

La Luciola and Milla accepted the invitation and

uttered a cry of surprise. They had entered a room decorated with the finest frescoes and hung with the richest silk and satin tapestries. In the centre of the room was a tent of blue silk under which sat a lady of extraordinary beauty, the same one who had attracted such attention at the Scala.

"Welcome, sisters," said Haydee in a gentle voice as she came toward them, "I was expecting you."

La Luciola and Milla bent over to kiss the white hand she extended toward them, but Haydee would not permit it, and pressing her lips to the young girl's forehead she drew them both to the divan.

"You have acted courageously, sister," said Haydee, turning to Luciola, "but I was not anxious about you. He told me he would watch over you."

La Luciola understood whom she meant by this "he," and she timidly replied:

"Madame, you seem to know all about the terrible affair. Would you permit me a question?"

"Gladly. Ask without fear; I will answer you."

La Luciola hesitated a moment and then firmly said:

"Madame, there is a patriot in Milan who is putting his life at stake for the freedom of Italy. He offered his breast to the minions of Radetzky—"

"You are speaking of the Marquis Aslitta," said Haydee, gently.

"Yes, of him, and if you knew my past you would understand that it is the love I bear for him which keeps me alive."

"Speak freely, sister," whispered the handsome Greek, "perhaps I can help you."

"I am a Frenchwoman by birth," said the diva,

timidly. "My youth was passed in the capital. I was courted and petted, and yet I was not happy. My father, occupied with his financial operations, did not bother himself about me. My mother was just as unhappy as I was. I would have become desperate if a dear friend had not clung to me," and putting her arm about Milla's waist, the diva continued:

"We were both devoted to music. It was a substitute for happiness to me, and in the empire of harmony I tried to forget my barren life. A certain trouble happened to me; in a twinkling all the ties which bound me to home were broken, and I fled, with misery and desperation in my heart! Madame, I was then hardly twenty, but virtue, honesty and love were already to me empty words!"

"Poor sister," murmured Haydee, "how you must have suffered."

"Yes, I suffered greatly," continued Luciola, with tears in her eyes. "The world appeared to be a desert, and so I devoted myself to art. In Naples I discovered that there was something besides the applause of the crowd and one's own ambition! A group of young Italian noblemen had come to Naples to free their brothers from the tyranny of the Austrian oppressors. One night we heard a loud noise. Not having anything to lose, I had my horse harnessed and rode in the direction of the cry. Milla insisted upon accompanying me. When we reached the spot, a bloody fight was going on. We saw shining uniforms. It was at Crotona in Calabria. On a ledge stood a young man, swinging a sword and urging his comrades on against the Austrians. A shot was fired and the young man fell. I urged my horse on toward the spot where I had last seen him. The unhappy man

had fallen down a precipice. With the help of my strong tunic, Milla and I succeeded in drawing him up. We brought him to my house and I cared for him tenderly. Giorgio Aslitta awoke to new life. His first words, as he gained sensibility, were:

'Chi per la patria muore
Vessuto ha assai.'"

"Ah, the battle hymn of the Italians," interrupted Haydee, her eyes glistening.

"Yes; and when I heard these words I was saved! I believed in man again, and no love song ever sounded so sweet to me as that patriotic hymn."

CHAPTER XXVII

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

HARDLY had Luciola uttered the last words, than a deep voice said:

"Eugenie Danglars, I thank you in the name of humanity! The past is forgiven!"

The diva turned affrightedly around. The Count of Monte-Cristo stood before her, leading his son by the hand.

"Oh, how grateful I am to you," said Luciola, sobbing. "You recognized me?"

"I have never lost sight of you," replied Monte-Cristo, earnestly; "and the name you bear makes me a debtor to you."

"You shame me, count—you my debtor?"

"Rest satisfied with what I have told you. I am not at liberty to reveal the sorrowful past to you. But be assured that if I have ever caused you grief, it was because I am the instrument of a higher power."

"You know something about my parents. I beseech you, do not hide anything from me," implored Luciola. "I know that my father lives, and—"

"One moment," interrupted Monte-Cristo, giving Haydee a wink.

Immediately the young woman put her hand upon the boy's shoulder and led him out.

"I know that my father is doing Stock Exchange business in Germany," continued Luciola, "but my poor mother—"

"Your mother lives too," interrupted the count, sorrowfully, "though I do not know whether you will ever see her again."

"I do not understand," stammered La Luciola.

"Listen, my child, and be strong. Have you recognized the wretch who calls himself Count San Pietro?"

"Recognized? No; he is a wretch who merits the contempt of every one."

"I thought Eugenie Danglars was shrewder than that. Of course his scar disfigures his face so much as to make it almost unrecognizable. Who was it, Eugenie, who, in former years, had the audacity to ask your hand in marriage, and then—"

"Prince Cavalcanti!" exclaimed La Luciola, horror-stricken.

"Yes, if you wish to call him thus; in reality, though, he is the escaped galley slave and murderer, Benedetto."

"But what has the wretch to do with my mother?"

"Unfortunately, more than you think; to rob your mother of her treasure, a full million, the monster plunged a dagger in her breast—"

"Oh, the miserable coward! But you told me my mother lived—"

"Yes, she lives! The murderer did not strike the heart as he had intended, and, after months of agony, the poor woman recovered."

"Thank God! But where is she? I want to go to

her and throw myself at her feet. My love will make her forget her grief," exclaimed Luciola, passionately.

"That is impossible just now. Your mother had intended to enter a convent, but chance just happened to throw her in Valentine de Villefort's way. You know her?"

"Oh, certainly; Valentine, the only one whom I love to remember among all my past acquaintances."

"Well, then, Valentine is now Madame Morrel. They left France and went to India. They needed a governess for their little daughters, and so she asked Madame Danglars to take the position."

"Poor mother," muttered Luciola, sorrowfully. "How hard it must have been for her to take a dependent position."

"Madame Danglars," said the count, "accepted the offer with thanks, and she tenderly loves Valentine and her daughters."

"How long has my mother been in India?"

"About three years."

"And do you know where she is?"

"I do not know Morrel's present address, but expect a letter from him soon."

Just then the deep tones of a bell were heard, and Monte-Cristo arose.

"My child," he solemnly said, "whatever your past has been, you have expiated it a thousand times, and you deserve the love of a humane and honest man."

"Ah, you recall Aslitta to me—where is he?"

Monte-Cristo sorrowfully shook his head.

"Eugenie, the Marquis d'Aslitta was arrested two hours ago."

"Arrested. Oh, my God! That is worse than death."

"All is not lost yet."

"Where is he?"

"In the citadel."

"Count, rescue him. You are superhuman. But tell me who betrayed him?"

"Benedetto."

Luciola uttered a cry of horror.

"I will do what I can," continued the count, "to rescue him."

"A thousand thanks; I believe you."

The count went to the door and called:

"Spero."

The handsome boy immediately appeared, and looked inquiringly at his father.

"Come with me," said the count. "You are still a child, but from this day forth you enter life. Courage and devotion to a just cause make the weak strong. Should I die before my work is done, then take my place."

A pressure of a silver bell brought Ali to the count.

"Are all here?" he asked.

The Nubian nodded.

"Ali, you know what you have to do. As soon as the slightest traitorous voice is heard, you give the signal."

Ali again nodded; the count shoved the curtain aside and disclosed a secret staircase.

"Spero, conduct La Luciola," he ordered, as he descended the stairs, followed by Spero and the diva.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CONSPIRATORS

ARRIVING at the foot of the stairs, Monte-Cristo entered a large hall, in which several hundred men were assembled. They all rose up from their seats, and, taking off their hats, greeted the count with loud cries of:

"Long live Italy!"

Monte-Cristo approached a white-haired old man, the Marquis of Sante-Croce, and asked him to preside over the assembly. Sante-Croce nodded, and began his address:

"Friends and patriots," he said, "the long-wished-for day has come. Are you ready to defend the flag?"

"So help us God! Out with the foreigners!" was shouted from all sides.

"Good! Now listen to what our noble friend, the Count of Monte-Cristo, has to tell us!"

The marquis took his seat, and the count, unrolling a paper, said in an earnest voice:

"I can bring you a piece of news which Marshal Radetzky has just received; a revolution has broken out in Vienna, and at this very hour the viceroy is leaving Milan."

A murmur of astonishment ran through the assembly.

"My couriers," continued the count, "were quicker than the emperor's, and in consequence of that I am better informed than the officials. The emperor has bowed to the necessity of the situation, and made important concessions—"

"No concessions!" said a voice; "we want freedom!"

"Patience," said Monte-Cristo. "The emperor has repealed the censorship; the new press law is very liberal, and the representatives of the German and Lombard-Venetian provinces have been convoked."

The astonishment was now general. Loud cries of "Impossible! impossible!" were heard.

"And when will the convocation take place?" asked Sante-Croce.

"Unfortunately not so soon—on the 3d of July," said the count, sorrowfully.

Angry murmurs arose.

"They wish to mock us," said a young man. "Radetzky's minions have murdered my brother; I demand revenge!"

"My mother was wounded at Corsa," said a second. "No compromises: war!"

"Yes, war to the knife!" shouted the whole assembly.

"One moment!" exclaimed Monte-Cristo, in a tone of command. "I know how angry you all are, and yet counsel you to reflect. A nation which is eager for independence, is strong and powerful, but your oppressors are as numerous as sands in the sea. You will conquer, Milan will be free; but when you have spilled your blood, and piled your bodies up like a wall, the

allies upon whom you count will desert you. You will fall again into the hands of the enemy, and the heavy yoke will become heavier. Charles Albert, the king of Sardinia, will betray you as soon as his ends have been served. Do you still desire to carry out your ideas?"

Monte-Cristo's words sounded prophetic. The patriots could not dissimulate the impression they made. But their opinions did not change.

"And if the worst should come!" said one, courageously, "I would rather die than hesitate any longer. To arms!"

"To arms, then!" repeated the Marquis of Sante-Croce, solemnly, "and may God be with us!"

"But where is Aslitta? He must lead us" some cried.

La Luciola advanced.

"The patriot Aslitta has been imprisoned," she sorrowfully said; "he is lying in the citadel."

A cry of rage arose.

"Let us rescue him," came from all sides. "Let us storm the citadel before they murder him."

"Yes, let us rescue him," said Monte-Cristo. "Let the fight begin to-morrow! To arms in the name of humanity and freedom!"

Suddenly a man arose from the crowd, who had heretofore remained silent, and casting a look at the count, he slowly said:

"We hardly know you. What guarantee will you give us that you won't betray us?"

"The man is right," the count replied. "Sante-Croce, here is my own child. Take Spero with you. Let him vouch for his father with his head!"

Sante-Croce refused to accept the guarantee, but Monte-Cristo was firm. The boy, with proudly uplifted head, strode toward the old man and said:

"I shall accompany you. My father has taught me to do my duty."

With enthusiastic cries the patriots crowded about the handsome lad, and Monte-Cristo felt his heart throb with joy as he looked at Spero.

"And I, too, will accompany you!" exclaimed La Luciola. "Italy must be freed, and Aslitta rescued."

CHAPTER XXIX

FATHER AND SON

BENEDETTO, who had been pushed into the open sea in a frail bark by the Count of Monte-Cristo, had been miraculously rescued by some fishermen, and when the murderer recovered consciousness his first glance fell on the box which stood near his bed. The contents were undisturbed, the poor fishermen had not thought of opening the box which the Count of Monte-Cristo had closed again, and thus the world stood open to the wretch.

His viperous instincts had not deserted him. One evening as Benedetto lay faint and weak on the straw, he heard low murmurs of conversation in the neighboring room. He discovered that his benefactors belonged to a patriotic league similar to the Carbonari, whose object was to free Italy. On this particular evening they were discussing the question of shipping arms and ammunition to their countrymen.

The next day Benedetto, with tears in his eyes, told them that he had to depart at once, as he was expected at Lucca by a friend of his. The honest fishermen took cordial leave of him. He arrived at Lucca, got some elegant clothing there, and went to Milan, where he rep-

resented himself as Count San Pietro. His first visit was to Radetzky, to whom he denounced the fishermen who had saved his life. Radetzky took advantage of the traitor's story, captured the fishermen, had them tried by court-martial, and then shot. From that moment San Pietro became a favorite of the marshal.

The Major Bartolomeo had been formerly a croupier in a large gambling house at Lucca. Where he got his major's title from, no one knew; even his mistress, the beautiful Aurora Vertelli, was reticent on this point. When Bartolomeo came back from Paris and threw his winnings, amounting to fifty thousand francs, into the lap of the handsome Aurora Vertelli, the practical beauty said:

"Bartolomeo, suppose we open a dining-room too. You have been a croupier long enough—let us try to turn over the fifty thousand francs."

Bartolomeo gleefully assented to this proposal. They opened a magnificent place, and were soon making money hand over fist. Yet—no luck without a shadow—one evening, as Bartolomeo was receiving his guests, a tall, slim young man, whose face was disfigured by a scar, approached him, and laying his hand upon his shoulder, whispered in his ear:

"Good-evening, father."

The major trembled, and, looking with affright at the stranger, stammered:

"I do not know you, sir—it would be a great honor to me—but—"

The stranger laughed loudly, and, conducting the major to a neighboring room, impressively said:

"My dear sir, let us be candid—do you remember

the name of Cavalcanti which you once wrongfully bore?"

The major grew pale, and the stranger continued unmercifully:

"If the officials were to find out that you were once a counterfeiter, it might go hard with you. Your license would be revoked, and besides—well, you understand."

The major looked about him in astonishment—who was the man who knew the secrets of his past life?

"Well, father?" mockingly said Benedetto.

"Father, father," repeated the major, dazed. "You are not—"

He mechanically opened his arms to press Benedetto to his heart.

"Not necessary," said the latter, laughing. "We are not in the Count of Monte-Cristo's house, and can dispense with tenderness."

The major sighed—for a further sum of fifty thousand francs he would have embraced ten Andreas.

"But who are you, anyhow?" he finally asked. "I thought I had heard that you—"

"Beware!" exclaimed Benedetto. "Do not refer to the past; here I am the Count of San Pietro!"

"The confidant—" stammered the major.

"Of Radetzky," added Benedetto.

"But as an Italian—"

"Keep silent and listen to me. Either you do as I say, or else I denounce you to the marshal," said Benedetto in a rough voice, and as the major bowed his head, the wretch explained to him what he wished of him. It was nothing less than to play the part of a spy.

One can call one's self a major, even play the part of a loving father for a sum of fifty thousand francs, and yet not be a traitor to one's country, and Bartolomeo, in spite of his being a criminal, was an ardent patriot; but when the count calmly said he would have Radetzky close the Casino, he gave in.

From that day the major tried to drive the Italians away from his Casino. He was pompous and disrespectful to his countrymen and polite and cordial to the Austrian officers, so that the latter were at length the only ones who came, and San Pietro's spy had very little news to report.

Aslitta, who was playing a double game, was the only one who could not be driven away. One day he took Bartolomeo aside, told him he knew his position exactly and would help him to deceive San Pietro and free Milan of the tyrant.

Bartolomeo, who until now found himself despised by his countrymen, was overjoyed; he threw himself at the feet of Aslitta, acknowledged him as his deity and vowed that he would follow him at command.

Bartolomeo arose, and as he did so he secretly resolved to square his account with Benedetto in such a way as to serve his country. He soon became the most clever of Aslitta's emissaries, and soon pictured himself as one of the most illustrious patriots of his country bedecked with laurels.

But fortune makes rapid strides. Through certain peculiar events Benedetto turned his attention to Bartolomeo and caused a strict watch to be kept upon him, and when on the evening of the 15th of March he saw him vanish from the Casino he realized all.

Night was already far advanced when he reached the damp subterranean cell of Bartolomeo and rattled the rusty hooks that held the bolts. The major having fallen into a pleasant revery in which he beheld visions of his future greatness as a martyr to duty's cause, raised his eyes and shrank back as he saw the three men, one of whom carried a cane tipped with hair of an unusual design.

"Get up, you old fool," cried the one who carried the cane, addressing the prisoner, "follow us!"

Bartolomeo rose without a murmur, and, arranging his disordered uniform, stepped between the two soldiers, who bore torches, and who rudely pushed him down a dark stair.

He was no coward, but yet he felt as though he would rather ascend to where he could at least enjoy the sunshine than go further down where it became darker and colder. They walked a considerable distance along dark passages, and halted in front of a rickety iron door. A huge key was thrust into the keyhole and slowly the bolts sprang back.

Accompanied by his guides, Bartolomeo stepped into a gloomy cavern—the torture-chamber. Heavy chains hung on the walls, blocks, tourniquets, thumbscrews, and other implements of torture lay upon the floor, while the corners contained a variety of others which the major could not recognize.

"Sit down," commanded the bearer of the cane, pointing to a block; as Bartolomeo hesitated, a well-directed blow caused him to accelerate his movements. Thereupon the man withdrew, leaving the major and the soldiers behind. The prisoner gazed timidly upon his jailers, and murmured:

"Poor prospects for me."

Although the remark was scarcely audible, a heavy blow from one of the soldiers caused him to stagger, and for the next fifteen minutes he remained silent.

At last the door was again opened and Benedetto entered; at a sign the soldiers withdrew; to his dismay, Bartolomeo saw his former son standing before him.

Benedetto wore the uniform of an Austrian officer, a kalpak was strapped over his forehead and his coat bedecked with costly gold lace. From his belt hung a dagger, whose handle was inlaid with jewels, which was partly concealed by the flowing mantle that covered his shoulders. As soon as he entered he threw off the mantle and posed, as if to dazzle Bartolomeo with the splendor of his attire.

"You know," he began, without wasting any words, "that you need expect no mercy from me."

The major remained silent, his speech failed him through the brusque manner in which he was addressed. Taking advantage of the situation, Benedetto continued:

"You have betrayed me. Don't deny it—I know all."

"I!" stammered the major, confused.

"Yes, you!—the virago has exposed you."

This remark roused the nobler qualities of Bartolomeo. He was astounded at the impudence of the knave who dared to call Aurora a virago.

"Be silent!" he cried, angrily; "and do not malign the character of a pure woman—you red-headed scoundrel!"

Benedetto moved as if to rise, but on second thoughts he remained seated, and burst into a hearty laugh.

"Your immutable confidence in your wife is to be

envied, but really it is out of place here. Aurora Vertelli has confessed to me what you will doubtless deny. I forced her to admit the truth at the point of the pistol."

The major grew pale, and beneath his clinched lips a terrible feeling raged.

"Base coward! to wring a confession from a woman in such a way."

"Enough—cease your idle talk," cried Benedetto, stamping his foot nervously. "Tell me, where do the so-called patriots hold their meetings? Do not hesitate. Aslitta is a prisoner like yourself, and I desire to know the truth."

"I do not know," replied the major, with a sinister smile.

"You don't say so. I am sorry for you, for I believed that your memory would come to the rescue," said Benedetto, casting a knowing glance at the implements of torture.

Bartolomeo's heart beat fast. He knew that Benedetto was capable of any crime. Not a muscle of his face trembled as Benedetto said threateningly:

"So you will not speak!"

Bartolomeo cast a look of contempt toward him, and exclaimed: "Go to the devil!"

Benedetto clinched his fist and held it in the face of the major.

"Did you not understand me? Look here! You see those beautiful toys?" pointing to the implements of torture. "I will dismember you if you hesitate longer!"

"Tell me, what did you want," demanded the major, with a shrug of his shoulders, "at the time when you

introduced me into the salon of the Count of Monte-Cristo?"

A cry of rage, uttered by Benedetto, interrupted him.

"Do not mention that name!" exclaimed the bandit, gritting his teeth. "If I kill you off and slay Aslitta it will only be to wreak my vengeance upon that man, whom I despise. Oh, he called me a galley slave once—the murderer!"

And he stopped short, his voice half choked with rage. Bartolomeo trembled visibly; and to humble him the more, Benedetto spat in his face.

The major scarcely regarded this last insult. He was busied with many reflections. How would it be if he tried to overpower Benedetto?

"Well, I am waiting," said San Pietro, after a pause; "will you speak?"

"No."

"You know that Aslitta is in my power, and you will die like him if you remain headstrong."

"Listen to me, Benedetto," said the major, earnestly. "I have lied and defrauded, but never will I consent to become a traitor to my country!"

"Well, then, come along!" cried Benedetto, seizing the major by the shoulder and shoving him to a corner of the closet. There stood an old wardrobe. Benedetto opened the door, and, by the flickering light of the torches, Bartolomeo saw the dim outlines of a human head, which stood out like a silhouette from the wall.

"Do you see that apparatus?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And do you know its purpose?"

"No."

"Then mark well what I say—you shall soon know! About a century ago an Italian nobleman was deceived by his wife, who had a liaison with one of his pages. The nobleman discovered it, but pretended ignorance in order to complete his plans for the destruction of both. One day he presented the page with a beautifully wrought helmet. As soon as the present was received, the page placed it upon his head, and, lo! it fitted him so perfectly that he could not take it off, and he died a horrible death; for as soon as it touched the forehead a concealed spring loosened and caused the helmet to drop over the head, thus choking him."

"Well," replied Bartolomeo, in suspense.

"Well, in this closet you will find the counterpart of that beautiful helmet. If you refuse to accede to my demands I shall summon aid and have you placed in the closet. A delicate attachment will push the helmet into place, and after your head has been placed inside, you will die a most horrible slow death by starvation, and that indeed is a terrible way to die."

"I am resigned," was the quick responsé of the major. With a strong grasp he seized Benedetto, who was unprepared for the attack, and pushed him into the wardrobe. The ominous helmet encircled his head, and, despite his struggles, he could not free himself.

Bartolomeo stopped for a moment; being a prudent man, he at once foresaw what was to be done. Throwing his green coat across his shoulders, he approached Benedetto. He tore the embroidered coat from his body, and replaced it by his own, and, together with the kalpak, which Benedetto had thrown aside, completed his toilet.

Hastily strapping the dagger to his side, he left the torture chamber. At the door he met the soldiers, who did not recognize him, and saluted him as he passed. His thoughts were not regarding his own safety--he desired to rescue Aslitta if possible.

CHAPTER XXX

IN THE WELL

THE subterranean prison into which Aslitta had been thrown was dark as pitch, and it was a long time before his eyes became accustomed to the darkness and he could make out his surroundings. He remembered that he had descended many steps, and he supposed that his cell was in the casemates of the citadel.

He soon discovered that the cell was very narrow but high; about ten feet above his head he found an opening, secured by iron bars. All attempts to reach this proved futile, and he could secure no foothold on the slippery walls.

What should he do? At any moment the door might be opened, and his captors enter and lead him to the torture-chamber, or, perhaps, to his doom. He did not fear death itself—but what would become of Luciola in case he died? The last meeting of the patriots was to take place this very evening. As it was, there were but a few of these in comparison to the number of their oppressors, and if but one remained away the good work might be seriously hampered.

He paced the floor deeply absorbed in thought, when suddenly he stumbled and fell, as it appeared, into a

vast empty space. Instinctively extending his arms, he caught hold of one of the projecting ledges, and so hung suspended in mid-air.

What was to be done? Aslitta strove to secure a foothold, but the relation of his accident to his imprisonment soon dawned upon him.

In the centre of the floor he had discovered an opening, which evidently was the passage leading to a well, or perhaps, as he thought, to one of the unused drains, such as there are many in the old castles. A low stone fence surrounded the opening, and it was this over which he had stumbled. Aslitta reflected for a moment—perhaps it was once covered with a stone, which, slipping out of place, dropped below. The opening was not very wide, and it was only after a great effort that he succeeded in jumping over the rail.

If he could only have seen whether there was water in the well which might aid him in his escape. What would he not have given for a match? But that was out of the question.

Suddenly he stopped short; it appeared as though he heard a noise proceed from the well. He listened, but again everything was quiet. He bent over the opening, and now he could distinctly hear a sound. It was a human voice—it was a curse he had heard uttered.

Placing his hands about his mouth he cried out:

"Is anybody here?"

No answer came. The prisoner waited and then called out once more.

Again no answer came.

Presently he heard a voice cry out, "You are a prisoner; are you not?"

"Yes, I am. Whoever you may be, have no fear; I am not your enemy," returned the voice of Aslitta.

"I am down in the water half drowned."

"Peculiar," thought Aslitta; "I ought to know that voice, it sounds so familiar;" and in a loud tone he asked, "Who are you?"

Yet no answer came; evidently the voice in the well doubted his sincerity. To his good fortune he found a match which he lighted. With a suppressed cry he shrank back; he recognized the uniform of the Austrian officer.

Before he could recover his surprise, he heard words in pure Italian proceeding from the well.

"Keep me up! I am sinking deeper and deeper."

Now there was no reason for doubt; were he friend or enemy he would save him. Quickly unfastening his scarf, he held one end firmly while he threw the other over into the well.

"Catch hold of the scarf," he called down, "the stuff is firm and will bear you."

Immediately thereafter he felt that his order had been obeyed—the heavy silk became taut.

"Pull up," a voice now cried from below, "I will hold tight."

Aslitta was young and powerful, but he had to exert himself terribly to pull up the heavy load and lift it over the rim of the well.

"Thank Heaven," the words reached his ear, "for the present we are saved. Ah, what would my poor Aurora say if she knew this?"

Aurora! This name seemed like a revelation to Aslitta, and, in glad surprise, he exclaimed:

"Bartolomeo—is it you?"

"Why, of course; but with whom have I the honor—It is as dark here as in a sack."

"I am Giorgio Aslitta."

"Heaven be praised that I have found you. I was looking for you."

"Indeed? Where, in truth, do you come from?"

"Oh, that would take us too far to-day. I fell into the clutches of that cursed San Pietro and escaped from him only through a miracle. Well, for that he's now got his deserts."

"Is he dead?"

"Oh, no. That sort of vermin has a very tough life, but he's locked up for the present, and therefore we must hurry up to clear out."

"I'm with you, only tell me how and in which way, and, besides, I would like to know how you obtained that Croatian uniform."

"Oh, that was a rare joke! It was San Pietro's uniform which I took from him. I will tell you the particulars later on—or do you mistrust me?"

"No, Bartolomeo, I know you as a good patriot."

"Thanks for this word. I come, besides, direct from the torture-chamber. After I had escaped from my torturer I was standing in a damp, narrow, totally dark passage. By groping along I reached a descending staircase; I slowly walked on and only stopped when I felt the moisture under my feet. But what could I do? I cautiously groped ahead, and soon my shoes were filled with water. It shortly afterward rose to my calves; and then, oh joy! I could again rise to my full height. The steps were at an end and I stood in a capacious vault,

as I could perceive by the light of a match. At the same time I felt a strong draught, and then I heard your question whether anybody was down there. I answered for luck—whether I was captured or drowned in the gradually rising water would, in the end, amount to the same thing."

"But why were you arrested?"

"Later on you shall hear all."

"Can you not at least tell me whether Luciola has been saved?"

"Yes, she is in safety in the Count of Monte-Cristo's house."

"Heaven be praised! Now I can die calmly," whispered Aslitta.

"Nonsense! who is speaking of dying? Think of our rescue. It is not safe to remain here, and the sooner we get out of this hole the better. Where is this cell?"

"Ah, if I knew that! I have no matches, and, therefore, could not very well fix where I was."

"Good; we will find out."

Bartolomeo drew a match from his pocket, and soon a bright light illuminated the cell, without, however, revealing a consoling prospect.

"Humph!" growled the major, "it was, after all, better down there."

"But there, also, you did not find an exit."

"True; but I was, perhaps, awkward. You may do better. Let us descend."

"As if that was so easy. If one holds the scarf, the other can descend, and that's the end of the chapter," said Aslitta, calmly.

"Well, one's enough," thought the major, after a few moments' deliberation.

"How so?"

"Well, I don't amount to much, and if I go under, my poor wife will be taken care of. You will give Aurora a small annuity, will you not, marquis, should she fall in need, and you will tell her that I died for my country? You, on the other hand, must preserve yourself. What would become of Italy without you? Come, I will hold the scarf, and you can descend by it. The more I consider it, the surer I am that there's a canal down there, by means of which we can get into the moat of the fortress. Well, won't you do it?"

"No," replied Aslitta, with emotion. "I would be a scoundrel to save myself at your expense."

"But there's no other way. Were I in your place I would not hesitate an instant. Think of your friends; you are to lead them, and if you are missing, they are lost."

Tears rose to Aslitta's eyes, but he resisted no longer, and, cordially shaking the major's hand, he said: "Friend, I accept your sacrifice, and if I find an exit, I will save you."

It seemed to Bartolomeo as if Aslitta's clasp was the most precious thing he had gained, and he was almost overcome with emotion. But he quickly recovered when he heard footsteps close at hand, and urged Aslitta to leave.

The young man embraced the major.

"Thanks, in the name of Italy!" he ardently exclaimed. Then, tying the scarf around his waist, he swung himself from the rim of the well.

Bartolomeo held the other end of the scarf with all his might. Aslitta must now have reached the bottom.

At the moment when the major let go of the silken stuff, a key was turned in the lock and the door opened. The major had crouched on the floor; but, as he threw a glance at those who entered, he almost uttered a loud ejaculation, for before him stood—Benedetto. "I thought so," muttered Bartolomeo, in a rage; "some cursed chance has rescued him. Such a scoundrel's soul is too bad for the devil himself."

"Get up, vagabond," roughly exclaimed Benedetto.

He had looked up Aslitta to avenge Bartolomeo's escape on him, and he was in a very bad humor.

As the major did not stir, Benedetto uttered an oath and cried:

"Are you deaf, Aslitta?"

He then snatched a torch from one of the soldiers who accompanied him and looked around. As if struck by lightning he started when a well-known voice tauntingly said:

"Good-day, Andrea Cavalcanti."

"You and always you!" cried the bandit furiously. "Where is the other one?"

The major shrugged his shoulders, while the soldiers looked in every corner and Benedetto angrily gnawed his under lip.

"He has probably escaped through the well," said one of the soldiers at last.

"Oh, then we have him sure," laughed another.

"Light here," ordered Benedetto, bending over the opening. The soldier obeyed as directed and Bartolomeo felt his heart cease beating.

"We have him sure," one of the soldiers had said. Was the well a trap? A strange sound was now heard.

The major sank on his knees. He recognized the noise. The water was slowly rising in the well and soon stood hand-high under the stone curbing.

"Where does the water come from?" asked Benedetto, stepping back.

"About a quarter of an hour ago," replied one of the soldiers, "the commander gave the order to open the sluices of Santa Maria. Canals run from the aqueduct under the citadel, and that's why I said before we had our prisoner sure. He is drowned."

"Speak, wretch!" said San Pietro, turning to the major. "Did Aslitta escape through the well?"

But Bartolomeo made no reply. A dull sob escaped his lips, and his eyes, filled with hot tears, fixed themselves, in horror, on the silk scarf which the rising flood wafted to and fro.

"One has escaped," cried Benedetto, from between his gritted teeth, "but the other shall suffer for it. Take the prisoner with you," he added, addressing the soldiers; "to-morrow at daybreak he shall be shot."

He walked toward the door. Bartolomeo slowly rose to his feet and muttered only a single word:

"Villain!"

CHAPTER XXXI

SPERO

THE morning of the 16th of March had come, and Milan had a martial appearance. Placards were attached to all the walls, informing the Imperial authorities of the ultimatum of the people of Lombardy; a great throng was gathered around these placards, and the streets were crowded with Austrian troops.

Grenadiers were on guard before the official buildings, but the sentinels were suddenly disarmed, and, without being able to tell how it happened, the palace was occupied by the citizens. The municipal councillors fled in every direction; only the president of the Senate remained firm, and only when the tumult became greater, he, too, went, guarded by an escort, to the Brobetto palace, which was situated in the centre of the city.

In the Via Del Monte the crowd was the greatest, and all passage was soon entirely cut off. Rifle shots were suddenly heard, deafening shouts followed, and there was a terrible confusion. Radetzky had ordered his soldiers to load heavily and to fire into the crowd. A howl of rage followed the first discharge, and numberless wounded fell to the ground. That was no honest combat, but an infamous massacre.

Monte-Cristo stood at one of the lofty arched windows

in the Vidiserti palace, and, with a dark frown, observed the terrible massacre which Radetzky's minions created in the streets. Spero stood at his father's side.

"See, papa," he said, with tear-choked utterance, "that wounded woman carrying a dead child. It was shot in her arms. Oh, the poor wretches, what did they do to the soldiers?"

"My child," sadly replied Monte-Cristo, "man's worst enemy is man!"

"Papa!" suddenly exclaimed Spero, "see, there, the flag!"

The count glanced in the direction indicated. A young Italian had just climbed up the tower of a church opposite the Vidiserti palace, and there unfurled the national standard. The tricolor fluttered gayly in the wind. Suddenly, however, the young man was seen to totter; he sought to hold himself, turned a somersault and fell crushed to the pavement. A bullet had hit him.

At this moment Bertuccio entered the hall.

"Well?" asked the count.

"Count, one of our emissaries has penetrated to the citadel. The Marquis Aslitta is no longer there!"

"What can that mean? Had he escaped he would have looked for us here," exclaimed the count uneasily.

"The man could learn nothing further," said Bertuccio, sadly; "but he was informed that some one else was found in the marquis's cell."

"Some one else? Who?"

"You know him. In Paris he called himself Major Cavalcanti, and here—"

"What about this substitute?" eagerly interrupted the count.

"He was sentenced to death; whether the sentence had been already executed our emissary could not ascertain."

"Bertuccio," said the count anxiously, "if Aslitta—"

"Aslitta is dead!" cried Luciola, who had entered unperceived and sank to her knees sobbing.

"Who dares to allege that?" exclaimed the count, turning pale.

"Step to the window," stammered Luciola.

The count did so and staggered back, for the sight he saw confirmed the poor girl's words; four men, with uncovered heads, carried a bier on which lay a motionless body. It was the Marquis Aslitta, and Monte-Cristo's heart swelled as he recognized him.

"How could this calamity have happened?" whispered Spero, clinging anxiously to Luciola.

Bertuccio, in the meantime, had run down into the street to direct the carriers. He now returned and tremblingly said:

"A quarter of an hour ago our men found the body in the moat of the fortifications; how Aslitta got there is a riddle."

Loud cries were heard from the street.

"Revenge on the murderers! Death to the miserable cowards."

A crowd numbered by hundreds gathered around the bier, and the carriers had trouble to reach the palace gate.

Luciola had dragged herself with difficulty to the staircase, but there she swooned away, and while Spero bedewed her beautiful pale face with his tears, he appealingly whispered to his father:

"Papa, you have already aided so many people, aid her too!"

Monte-Cristo started. He had promised Luciola to save Aslitta, and now—

The next moment he was standing beside the bier; his gaze rested searchingly, with unspeakable terror, on the pale features of the drowned man, and with trembling hands he bared the bosom and placed his ear to Aslitta's breast.

At this instant the beating of drums was heard and a Croatian battalion turned the corner of the street.

"Men," exclaimed Monte-Cristo, "carry the Marquis Aslitta into the Vidiserti palace, and if you love your leader, who has staked his life for you, see to it that no soldier enters the building! Turn the palace into a bulwark against which the soldiers smash their skulls, and who knows whether Italy and Aslitta may not, together, become resurrected?"

Luciola had heard the prophetic words; she rose up, and, approaching the bier, exclaimed enthusiastically:

"You hear his words; he always keeps what he promises. To arms, friends! Long live Italy and Liberty."

A shout of joy answered Luciola. The next instant the street was blocked by turned wagons, logs and other obstacles, the pavement was torn up, and as the Croatians approached they found a raging multitude ready for defence. At a first-story window of the Palace Vidiserti Luciola stood and encouraged the patriots. She had seized a flag, and, unmindful of the bullets which whistled around her, waved the tricolor in the air.

The spark had dropped into the powder barrel; from

all sides the patriots rallied around the national standard, and, amid the ringing of the alarm bells, the insurrection kept growing in dimensions.

Luciola had long ago left her place at the window and stood on a barricade, waving her flag and spurring on the combatants. The Croatians retreated after about an hour. Surrounded on all sides by the Italians, they sought safety in flight, and the patriots followed them with shouts of joy.

Luciola now left the barricade, and, hastening into the palace, sank on her knees beside the bier, on which Aslitta still lay extended motionless. She raised her clasped hands to Monte-Cristo, who was busying himself about the lifeless man, and imploringly exclaimed:

"Count, I have kept my word—the tricolor waves in freedom in Milan; restore Giorgio to me."

The count did not reply; he held in his hand a small vial containing a dark-red liquid, and slowly he dropped single drops on Aslitta's compressed lips.

At this instant Sante-Croce rushed into the apartment and excitedly exclaimed:

"Things are bad, count. Radetzky has retreated with his troops into the citadel and begins to bombard the city! You have promised to assist us with act and counsel, and, instead of redeeming your word, you are wasting the time in useless revivification experiments. Let the dead alone and take care of the living."

Monte-Cristo's flashing eyes fixed themselves on the old patriot, and with ringing tones he retorted:

"Marquis, I have as yet always kept my word."

"But when? It may soon be too late. We are lack-

ing in arms and ammunition, and the superiority of numbers will crush us if we are defenceless."

"Ali," ordered the count.

The Nubian appeared and glanced inquiringly at his master.

"You have the key of the vault which contains the arms and ammunition?"

Ali nodded.

"Go and show the Marquis of Sante-Croce the way to the vaults. Arm the patriots, marquis, and believe my words, before night Radetzky will give up the fight and to-morrow will leave Milan. Stop, one instant yet; I told the patriots that the Marquis Aslitta would lead them. I have kept my word. See for yourself. Aslitta opens his eyes; he lives."

The dark eyelids really opened, and with a dreamy look Aslitta surveyed the people who surrounded him.

"Thanks be to God, he lives!" exclaimed Luciola, gleefully.

"Calm yourself, Eugenie," said the Count. "Aslitta must be spared for the present any excitement! Leave him to me, he will soon recover."

"Oh, you have performed a miracle," said Luciola, enthusiastically.

Monte-Cristo bowed his head and a tear glistened in his eye.

It was in memory of his friend and teacher, the Abbe Faria.

Sante-Croce looked wonderingly at the count.

"You are a god!" he exclaimed; "forgive the words I spoke before."

"I have nothing to forgive," replied the count, gently; "I have only to keep what I have promised. Spero, come here."

"Here I am, papa," called the boy.

"Good, my son. You know your duty. Accompany the patriots; take my place until Aslitta's condition permits me to relieve you."

A cannon-shot caused the house to shake to its foundations, and Haydee, pale and trembling, entered.

"The bombardment begins," she whispered to her husband. "Oh, the cruelty!"

Monte-Cristo threw his arm about his handsome wife, and giving the boy a wink, he consolingly said:

"Spero will be worthy of you and me. Come, Spero, say good-by and go."

Spero pressed a kiss on Haydee's lips, threw his arms about his father's neck and whispered in his ear:

"I will do my duty."

Turning to the marquis he put his hand in that of the old man and said:

"Let us go!"

A half-hour passed by. Monte-Cristo and Haydee were still busied with Aslitta, when a servant entered bearing a sealed letter on a silver salver.

"A courier who has come from France has just brought it," said the servant, in answer to a question of the count's.

"Did he give his name?"

"Yes; he said his name was Penelon, and that he came from Marseilles."

"From Marseilles!" exclaimed Haydee, anxiously; "oh, quick! see what the letter says."

Monte-Cristo broke the seal. The letter only contained a few words:

"I am dying from grief. Come at once!

"MERCEDES."

The count handed the letter to Haydee. The latter read it and then said:

"When do we go?"

"Thanks, Haydee," said the count, tenderly. "We go as soon as my duty here is ended! Give the necessary orders. Let Bertuccio inform Jacopo and rest easy! See, Aslitta has recovered—God will protect Spero!"

CHAPTER XXXII

ECARTE

BARTOLOMEO was thrown into a subterranean dungeon of the citadel, and now that Aslitta was lost he accepted his fate calmly. He could not be of any further service to the fatherland.

As he was sitting meditatively in his cell, the door opened and a corporal entered.

"What do you wish?" asked the major politely. "What time is it?"

"Three o'clock in the morning," replied the corporal, a handsome young fellow with blue eyes and blond hair.

"Only three o'clock. Then I have three long hours still to live. Can't I be shot at once?"

"No, no chance whatever."

"How awkward. What shall I do with myself? It's so monotonous here!"

"Oh, you can remedy that," said the corporal, laughing.

"How so? What do you mean?" asked Bartolomeo.

"Well, you see, I know that you are a good card-player. To-morrow I must shoot you, and before doing so I came here to ask you to do me a favor. Will you please teach me *ecarte*?"

"With pleasure," replied the major.

"Good; then let us begin," said the soldier, gleefully, and pulling a pack of cards out of his pocket, he threw them on a chair and went away, returning shortly afterward with a drum.

The major seated himself on a chair, the corporal on the bed, and the drum served as a table.

The corporal was a good scholar and soon learned the elements of the game. Bartolomeo was delighted. He dealt, picked up, trumped, and forgot entirely that in a few hours he would be shot.

When the clock struck four, the young man had won twice, and he proudly exclaimed:

"If my luck continues, I will be ahead of you soon. Couldn't we play for money?"

"No, that would be unfair," replied the major, "I am so superior to you."

"Oh, that could be tested by a trial. But first I will get some rum. I am thirsty, and you are so also, no doubt."

"Thanks, I will take some too," replied Bartolomeo.

The corporal disappeared. As soon as the footsteps died away, the major took the cards and stacked them. When the soldier returned with the rum, the major had already taken his place.

"Ah, that tastes good," he said, after he had taken a deep draught.

The corporal drank also and then they sat down again. This time the game was for money, the stakes being a few pennies. After a while, the soldier in the meantime having won repeatedly, the stakes were increased. The major continued to lose, and soon the soldier had won

all of Bartolomeo's cash. While the play was going on they drank often, and when Bartolomeo refused to play any more because his money was all gone, the corporal said he would lend him a few lire.

"Ah, if I lose these too," remarked the major, "the time will have gone by for a revenge. It is already past five o'clock."

"Bah—let us play anyhow!" exclaimed the corporal, exhilarated by the money he had won and the liquor he had swallowed.

A slight smile crossed the major's lips. The play began again, but this time the prisoner won. It did not take long before the major had not only won back all his money, but that of the corporal's too, and just as the latter had asked him for a loan a knock was heard at the door.

"Confound it!" exclaimed the corporal, "who is disturbing us now?"

In answer to a harsh "Come in," the door opened and a soldier appeared. He announced that it was time to go to the barracks in the Piazza Poliziotti.

"It is all right; I shall be there directly," answered the corporal.

The soldier departed, and the corporal now turned to Bartolomeo, who had arisen from his chair.

"One more game," begged the Austrian.

"Not for the world. I must collect my thoughts now, and close my account with God," replied the major.

"But you won my money and ought to give me a revenge."

"Gladly, if I only had time to do so."

The corporal, who was very tight, swore roundly.

The major gazed at him for a moment, and then in a hesitating way said:

"I know a way out of the difficulty."

"What is it?" asked the corporal, breathlessly.

"Your order is to shoot me, and then to go to the barracks; postpone the execution half an hour—take me with you to the Poliziotti barracks, and I will give you your revenge there," proposed Bartolomeo.

"Certainly," cried the corporal, gleefully.

He strode in advance of Bartolomeo, and ordered his men to take the major along to the barracks.

The soldiers looked at one another in astonishment, but none dared to say a word, and at a quick step they were on their way to the barracks.

"Time won—everything won," muttered the major. "I have not played cards a lifetime for nothing."

CHAPTER XXXIII

FORWARD!

IN THE streets of Milan the battle raged. The Italians resembled lions in courage, and soon one bulwark after another fell into their hands. The ladies of the aristocracy were busy in the Casa Borromeo melting lead and making cannon-balls. All the druggists and chemists manufactured powder and gun-cotton, and the gunsmiths gave up their stocks of firearms.

In spite of the brave resistance of the Austrians, the Borletto Palace had been conquered again by the patriots. Radetzky demanded an armistice, but his proposition was declined. The enemy were not allowed time to collect themselves.

One barrack after the other was captured, and then the great mass of the patriots turned toward the Casa Santa Margarita, where the *elite* of the artillery had taken up a position, and a bitter struggle ensued. The battle raged indecisively for a long time, when suddenly a bright flame issued from the gate. A patriot, Pasquale Sottocorni, had stealthily reached the palace and set it on fire. He was the first victim of his heroic deed, and died with the cry on his lips:

"Long live Italy!"

But his boldness helped the patriots materially. The escaping soldiers were taken prisoners, and the ranks of the people were recruited in numbers. The Poliziotti barracks still remained to be captured. The Poliziotti was intensely hated in Milan because it was mainly filled with renegades—Italians who sold themselves to Radetzky.

While the fight was going on about the building, Bartolomeo and the corporal were sitting in a room playing cards. The major permitted his pupil to win and lose at times. Every minute he gained was precious to him, and the corporal did not dream of shooting his teacher while they were playing *écarte*.

From time to time a soldier put his head in the room to ask when the execution was going to take place.

Every time he did so he was told to be off.

The corporal had just finished dealing the cards, when the soldier again appeared.

"Corporal," he said, breathlessly, "the Poliziotti are giving way, the Croatians are decimated—shall we go to their rescue?"

"Bah! we are only a handful," growled the corporal. "Let us await the result."

The door closed behind the soldier. Bartolomeo now sprang up, took the sword and gun from the drunken corporal, and cried in his ear:

"Obey my order, or you are a dead man!"

"What—should—I—do?" stammered the corporal, partly sobered.

"Hoist the white flag—quick!"

"But I—have—no—authority—here!"

"Who cares?" exclaimed Bartolomeo, "give the order

—the people will be needlessly sacrificed—are you going now?"

The corporal still hesitated, but just then a police sergeant ran in and cried:

"Corporal—let your men get shot—the scoundrels refuse to fight!"

Bartolomeo had placed himself behind the corporal; the muzzle of the gun lay against his knee, and this fact made the Austrian obedient.

"My people are right," he said, gruffly; "I have given the order to hoist the white flag."

"The white flag? What for?"

"Special order from the marshal," replied the corporal.

"Which reached you?" asked the sergeant, distrustfully.

"Yes; do not consider any longer!" thundered Bartolomeo, coming forward; "I have brought the order myself."

The sergeant saw the Austrian uniform; he disappeared hurriedly, and Bartolomeo called after him:

"God help you if the flag is not hoisted before two minutes have passed."

Suddenly the firing ceased, a loud noise was heard. The Italians saluted the white flag—the signal of peace.

In the barracks itself loud curses were heard—Count San Pietro had discovered that the white flag had been hoisted, and was heaping insults upon the officers. No one admitted having given the order. Benedetto, though, did not look kindly upon the proposition of an old colonel to have the flag removed. With a diabolical smile he said:

"If the patriots have any confidence in the flag, then it's their own fault. Follow my commands punctually, and I will forget your stupidity."

A few minutes later a terrible crash was heard, followed by a loud cry. From all the windows the bullets flew; the cannons threw death and destruction into the ranks of the trusting patriots.

The confusion only lasted a moment.

"Surround the rat-hole! Not a single one must escape —down with the polizotti!" exclaimed the Italians, wildly.

In firm columns they advanced against the barracks, and then they paused. Suppose treachery was in store for them?

The patriots now retreated to the right and left, to make room for two persons: a white-haired old man and a handsome dark-featured boy. The old man turned to the Italians, and said in a loud voice:

"Friends and brothers! The barracks of San Francisco, San Vittore and the military hospital are in our possession. Radetzky's palace has been stormed, and the marshal's baton has fallen into the hands of the conquerors. Forward, with God! We two, an old man and a weak child, will show you the way!"

Proudly erect, the old man strode toward the door, and Spero walked hurriedly behind him, and a fanatical, enthusiastic crowd followed.

On the threshold stood an Austrian officer. He lifted his gun, and triumphantly exclaimed:

"Ha, Monte-Cristo—to-day I shall strike you through the heart! Curses on you and your race!"

The gun directed against Spero's breast went off. When the smoke had cleared away, the boy stood

there unharmed, while a man tumbled down at his feet. It was Bartolomeo! Taking advantage of the confusion, he ran away and came just in the nick of time to receive Benedetto's murderous bullet in his breast.

A quarter of an hour later Aslitta appeared accompanied by Monte-Cristo and La Luciola. He was still pale and exhausted, but he swung his sword and joyfully exclaimed: "Radetzky has fled. The citadel has surrendered."

The Italians embraced each other. Their dream was realized. Milan was free.

"Papa," whispered Spero, "come with me. There is a man lying over there who sacrificed himself for me."

Monte-Cristo bent over the major, whose pale face lighted up joyfully when he saw the count.

"Let me see the wound," said Monte-Cristo. "Who knows but—"

"Unnecessary," whispered Bartolomeo; "my adopted son understands—how—to—aim!"

"Ha! then it was Benedetto!" exclaimed the count.

"His bullet was intended for me," said Spero. "He said he wished to strike you through the heart."

"The monster!" said Monte-Cristo, and turning to Bartolomeo, he added: "and how shall I thank you?"

"Ah!—that—does good," stammered Bartolomeo. "Count—care for—Aurora. Ah!—I am dying. Your hand—farewell—child. Italy—is—free!"

The major stretched himself out and his eyes became glassy.

Spero sobbed bitterly, and the count whispered:

"May the earth be light to you. If you have sinned, your love for your country has made atonement!"

One hour later the count, Haydee and Spero bade adieu to Aslitta and Luciola in the Café Vidiserti.

"Farewell, marquis," said the count, throwing a knowing glance at Aslitta, who held the diva in his arms.

Aslitta nodded.

"To-day Luciola will be my bride," he gently said.

"Why do you wish to leave us?" exclaimed Luciola, sobbing.

"Because others need me. Come, Haydee, Mercedes is waiting."

CHAPTER XXXIV

SERGEANT COUCOU

TEN years had passed since Mercedes had bade her only son good-by. She lived in the small house in the Allee de Meillan at Marseilles, which formerly belonged to old Dantes, and though her face was pale and her eyes no longer sparkled as of yore, the widow of General de Morcerf was still a wonderfully handsome woman. Mercedes was standing at the window, gazing out upon the sea. Behind her stood a man in the uniform of a Zouave. Small, brown and thin, he looked like the type of what a Zouave is generally thought to be.

What the Zouave's name was no one exactly knew. He had many sobriquets, the most popular of which was "Sergeant Coucou," so that after a while he was never called otherwise.

The sergeant's cradle, in spite of his brown skin, had not stood in Africa, but in the Faubourg Merceau in Paris.

Coucou was the son of a poor washerwoman. His first studies were made on the curbstone and in the gutter, and pretty soon he became the toughest boy in the neighborhood. His mother decided the time had come for her

son to enter the army. Coúcou did not hesitate long; only he made it a condition that he be allowed to enter an African regiment. The mother was satisfied. A regiment which bore the trusting name, the "Jackals," was just on the point of sailing to Algiers, and so Coucou became a Jackal.

When the time for saying good-by came, the mother began to weep, but Coucou consoled her.

"You see, mamma," he said, confidently, "I will make a name for myself, and when you read about my heroic deeds in the papers, you will be proud of me."

The mother laughed between her sobs. The few pennies she had saved she used to buy a pair of spectacles to read the forthcoming chronicles; for she was one of that class of innocent people who believe that the faculty of reading rests in spectacles.

About the year 1843 the Zouave regiment, to which Coucou belonged, made a sortie under General Cavaignac against the Kabyles in Beni Djaad. Among the few who escaped was the Sheik Sidi ben Abed. No one knew where he had disappeared to, and when the call to retreat had been sounded, Coucou declared he would remain behind to find out where the Kabyles were.

"They will kill you," his comrades warned him.

"Bah! a Parisian child does not fear the devil!" said Coucou, laughing.

In a few minutes he had disappeared. The soldiers feared the worst; but, to their astonishment, Coucou came back in a few hours, dragging the sheik by his long beard behind him. The Kabyle was armed to the teeth, but nevertheless Coucou had forced him to succumb without a struggle.

Six months later Coucou was struck over the head by a yatagan, and, but for the timely interference of a comrade, would have been killed. How the sergeant came to the little house in the Allee de Meillan we will relate further on. One thing was certain, Mercedes' silence made him feel uncomfortable; but his eye lighted up when the door opened, and a small white hand was laid on Mercedes' shoulder, and a clear, bright voice said:

"Good-day, my dear little woman."

CHAPTER XXXV

MISS CLARY

MERCEDES trembled and shrunk away, although the possessor of the small white hand was a charming young girl.

A pretty little head with ash-blond hair, deep blue eyes and fresh red lips made Miss Clary Ellis—that was the name of the eighteen-year-old girl—a very beautiful picture, and the sergeant drew back respectfully, while Mercedes said:

"Good-day, my darling—always joyful, always happy."

"And you are always sorrowful, and have tears in your eyes. Better take me for a model, who, as a consumptive, have far more reason to be melancholy than you have."

"I am waiting," said Mercedes, sorrowfully, "for him, and he will surely come if he lives."

"And who is he?"

"He is a faithful friend in need," replied Mercedes, solemnly, "and I love him as if he were divine. But tell me what brought you here to-day? Curiosity?"

"Ungrateful woman," pouted the English girl, "as if I did not like to come here. But if you are so solemn, why—"

"Oh, Clary, I am not solemn—I am melancholy, and at times desperate."

"Desperate? How can you say such a thing?"

"If you had lost everything, as I have, you would understand me," said Mercedes, gently. "Ah, Clary, I have seen everything about me tumble, but I remained easy so long as my son was with me! Since he has left me the world has no pleasures for me, and should I never see him again—"

"But, madam," interrupted Coucou, "how can you talk that way! Why should you not see my brave captain again? My captain is not one of those who are eaten by Kabyles for supper. He defends his life, and if he should be in the bowels of the earth I will find him. I—"

"Brave sergeant!" exclaimed Clary, and turning to Mercedes, she said:

"You must not despair, little woman. As far back as I can remember people always said about me: 'Ah, the poor child, to have to die so young—it is terrible—she must go to the south!' My father and brother made me sign all kinds of documents in case of my death. What was the use of my fortune if I died, and it was a settled fact I was to die?"

With a gay laugh Clary arose, and, bidding Mercedes a cordial farewell, left the house. The light-hearted girl's full name was Clara Ellis, and three months before, she, and her French governess, the widow of a police sergeant, had settled down in Nice. Madame Caraman, or, as Clary called her, Mamma Caraman, was of sound health, while her young ward, according to the opinion of eminent English physicians, was in an indifferent

state of health. They sent her, because she suffered from a slight cough, and as being incurable and consumptive, to the south. Nice was the Eldorado of all chest complaints, and thus the ladies took up their residence in that place.

Lord Ellis, Clary's father, had inherited from his parents a large fortune, which, however, he squandered in noble passions, and it was feared that his son Sir Edward, the heir-at-law, would one day inherit only the empty title. But it happened that owing to the sudden death of a rich aunt residing in India, Sir Edward's sister, Miss Clary Ellis, inherited an immense fortune, and from that day Lord Ellis began to pay attention and took care of his daughter to a much greater extent than he used to do. Clary since her eighth year had lived in a world of her own imagination; fantastic ideas and representations were the fruits of her education, which pompous governesses had inculcated at an early age, and the education recommended to Clary was for the sole purpose of increasing her romantic inclinations. The heroines of Byron and Lamartine were enviously looked upon by Clary—the "Sorrows of Werther" were continually lying upon her desk ready for perusal, and the young enthusiast was soon convinced that there was no nicer death than that of Marie Beaumarchais.

Almost with joy she welcomed her sickness, looking upon it as a forerunner of approaching dissolution. Wrapped in furs, she spent her days upon her couch, and from an "imaginary patient" she was becoming a real sick person; inasmuch as the want of exercise, as well as the continual strain on the whole nervous system, did not fail to have its effect.

Lord Ellis faced with manly courage the hard lot of losing his daughter at an early age. It was indeed a great pity that Clary could not make use of and enjoy her wealth, but what else could be done? As a careful father the lord prepared for any emergency; he urged Clary to sign various papers, which entitled him and his sons to make use of her immense wealth. The sum thus turned over for his use amounted to above one million sterling—but what good did it do? If Clary died, she could not, after all, take away her great wealth; and the million sterling was only a share of the still larger sum thus to be expected in case of her demise.

The physicians all agreed that Clary should at least hold out and die in the south, and a companion had to be procured. She soon found one in the person of Madame Caraman, a lady of about forty-five years, who showed a sincere interest in her suffering ward, and thus they entered on their journey. But soon Madame Caraman found reason to doubt the incurability of her patient—she noticed that Clary, when leaving her carriage, or performing any other movement of the body, usually painful for chest complaints, never felt pain or the slightest inconvenience.

This lasted for some time, and then Madame Caraman one day said quite earnestly:

"My dear child—now it is enough—you are as much sick as I am! You will be kind enough from this day to try to eat heartily, in order to regain your strength; you will drink daily a glass of Bordeaux and take a walk with me, and not, like a sick bird in its cage, remain wrapped up in the corner of a carriage. No—no objections. You will also never cough again as you

get accustomed to it; and after the lapse of a month we will see what further to do."

Clary sighed and sobbed, but it was no use—Madame Caraman stuck to her will, and, trembling and hesitating, the young lady was persuaded to eat her first beefsteak, and to her great surprise she was not suffocated by the unaccustomed food; the wine she found excellent, and Madame Caraman triumphed.

An accident happened which also brought help. One night some robbers tried to enter their villa; the servants slept in a building close by, and in this emergency Madame Caraman took to arms as soon as she heard a suspicious noise. With a heavy silver candlestick in her hand she entered the parlor from whence the noise proceeded. She knocked a person down, but ere she could pick up the heavy candlestick the second one had got hold of her throat and she would have been lost had not a shot been fired at the same moment, and her assailant with a loud shriek fell to the ground.

When Madame Caraman turned around she saw Clary, pale, but with a pair of beaming eyes, standing at the entrance of the room, and in her tiny white hand the yet smoking pistol.

The servants rushed in—the wounded were made prisoners, and Madame Caraman had to thank Clary with tears in her eyes for her assistance.

"Well, for one already half dead you certainly possess a great deal of strength and energy," she said afterward, with cunning look; "only courage, dear child—we will soon see who is in the right."

Clary was, to all appearance, from this day continually becoming more cheerful, and her strength increased

gradually. It is no wonder that sometimes she still clung to her painful ideas, and thought it not worth while to live, while Madame Caraman tried hard to teach her better principles.

"You must have some kind of occupation," she said; "you must give your life some aim, some purpose."

"But how? Nobody stands in need of me," sobbed Clary.

"Oh, that is only your own belief, but it is not so. There is much sorrow and misery in the world, but in large and fine streets you cannot meet with it, and only in narrow streets and lanes and alleys can you find it. I am, for instance, a native of Paris, and I know that in the beautiful town every day many die of hunger, if not in the Rue de la Paix and on the Boulevard des Italiens."

"Alas," sobbed Clary; "if I could help them!"

"And why should it be impossible?" said Madame Caraman, in an amiable voice; "misery is easily found—one must only look for it."

"Madame Caraman, I should like to call you Mamma Caraman; will you allow me?"

"With pleasure, dear child."

"Well, then, Mamma Caraman, I am getting tired of Nice."

"I am also tired of it," nodded the companion.

"How should you like to go to Marseilles?"

"With pleasure, my dear child."

"And, Mamma Caraman, I should like to do the journey on horseback," added Clary, in a hesitating voice.

"Still better, dear child—when we reach Marseilles you will be sound in health."

Eight days later we find Clary and her companion settled down in Marseilles. Madame Caraman was in the right—the young patient got round gradually now, as she felt a real desire to get better, and whoever saw the fresh, blooming girl on horseback thought her rather to be anything else than a sufferer from consumption.

In Marseilles Clary got to know misery and sickness in every form and shape, and now she began to see the blessing of being wealthy. She gave with full hands, and Madame Caraman was proud of her conquests since her first journey undertaken under such discouraging circumstances.

Upon a walk in the Meillan alley Clary noticed Mercedes—that beautiful pale face, with its dark, deep-set, sorrowful eyes, which attracted the young girl's attention in an irresistible manner, and a pocket-handkerchief which Mercedes dropped offered her ample and good opportunity to enter upon a conversation with the owner.

Mercedes admired the lovely young girl, whose mirth showed nothing of the rudeness which, especially to mourners, becomes very disagreeable. They often met, and after a few days Clary was quite at home in the little house in which Mercedes resided.

Mercedes very soon became acquainted with the past life of the young English lady—she assisted Madame Caraman in all her work to give to Clary's life, up to now aimless, a fixed object and satisfaction, and it stands to reason that the young girl also felt great interest for Mercedes. Mercedes was only too happy to find an opportunity to speak about Albert—during the ten years he sojourned in Algiers, his letters had been the joy of

his mother. Albert called himself Joliette—the name of Morcerf contained for him, the same as for Mercedes, terrible recollections—and soon Clary admired and looked upon Captain Joliette as something of a higher being.

Albert's letters, which, up to now, had always regularly reached Marseilles, now remained away altogether, and a time of indescribable anguish commenced for Mercedes—the arrival of the Jackal Coucou only increased her troubles, for the news which he brought was unsatisfactory, and thus the mother resolved at length to send that call for help to Monte-Cristo.

While Mercedes spoke to Clary the sergeant stood at the window, and he called out suddenly:

"Just now a beautiful yacht, in full sail, is entering the harbor—ah, now I can read the inscription on the vessel; it is the Ice Bird."

"God be blessed," sobbed Mercedes, falling on her knees. "Ah, I was aware that he would come!"

"I shall go, dear mother," said Clary, rising, "but mind, if anything of importance happens, I hope I shall also know of it?"

"At once," nodded Mercedes, "Monsieur Coucou, pray accompany Mademoiselle Clary, and return immediately in case you are wanted."

The sergeant nodded and both went away.

Soon after a carriage stopped before the door. A man got out and hastened up the narrow staircase.

"Mercedes," he called aloud, with faltering voice; it resounded upon him—"Edmond, Edmond!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

A MOTHER

FOR a moment Mercedes and the count stood motionless opposite each other; then Monte-Cristo extended his hand to the sobbing woman, and in a faltering voice he begged:

"Mercedes—to-day I know that I have sinned—I have punished harder than I had a right to do, and I can only supplicate you to forgive me. Take my life and I shall not murmur. I thought to fulfil my duty, and have executed revenge!"

"No, Edmond—do not talk like this!" said Mercedes, softly; "the lot which met me I deserved even more than— Broken faithfulness must always revenge itself bitterly. The misfortune which nowadays pulls me down has nothing to do with the past, and therefore I ask your help."

"Then speak, Mercedes—I hear," replied Monte-Cristo, simply.

"Edmond," began Mercedes, without further apologies, "you know what was the intention of my son, for whom I was attached to life when everything around was destroyed. Alas! Albert is the favorite of my heart; do not think me foolish, if I tell you he was worthy of

you! His letters, which breathe of his uninterrupted, faithful filial love, have kept me alive ten long, lonesome and weary years; when I read his tender words, when he embraced me, all my hopes centred in the moment when we should meet again! But suddenly all letters ceased to arrive. I waited many a long day, weeks, months, but all in vain—no news came.

"I anxiously read all papers—I inquired and hoped, but I could bring nothing to light. At length I resolved to write to Paris to the Minister of War—I received no answer, and my despair increased daily.

"Then an accident led Monsieur Beauchamp to Marseilles—I took heart to look for him, and acquainted him with my sorrow. He received me very kindly, listened to me, and promised to exert himself to obtain some information for me. After eight days I received the sad news—"

"Then Albert is dead?" said the count, sorrowfully.

"Oh, God, no—say not so—he cannot, he dare not be dead!" sobbed Mercedes. "The news which Beauchamp acquainted me with was disheartening enough. My poor son, captain in the first Zouave regiment, or the so-called Jackals, about three months ago, after an expedition against the Kabyles, disappeared; they fear the wild horde has taken him away!"

Monte-Cristo reflected a moment and then inquired: "Did it happen before or after the submission of Abd-el-Kader?"

"After, as much as I can tell. Monsieur Beauchamp, however, was not satisfied with the uncertain reports—he informed me that a Zouave from Albert's regiment was on furlough in Paris, and he would not fail to have

the Zouave sent to Marseilles to inform me of all, in a more particular way."

"And has this Zouave arrived?" inquired Monte Cristo, animatedly.

"Yes, a few days since."

"And what does he say?"

"He maintains Albert is still alive."

"Then we may yet hope for the best, Mercedes," said Monte-Cristo, consolingly. "God owes you a recompense, and you will see your son again!"

"If you say so, I believe it," replied Mercedes sincerely.

"May I also speak with the Zouave?"

"Certainly—he is downstairs now."

"Then let him come up; I should like to ask him a few questions."

Mercedes called the sergeant; Monte-Cristo looked at her pitifully and then whispered:

"Mercedes—here this has reference to my life—you have known me from childhood—have I ever broken my word?"

"Oh, no—only I am guilty of it!"

"I did not wish to hear of that—you have my cath, and with the help of God I shall keep the same!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE RING

CAP in hand, the Zouave appeared, and, throwing an inquisitive glance at the count, he said politely:

"What is your pleasure, madame?"

"Dear friend," was the kind reply of Monte-Cristo, "madame has called you, because I intend to ask you a few questions; I know you love your captain, and therefore—"

"Well, I do love him," replied Coucou, enthusiastically. "I am ready to be cut in pieces for him."

"With that we need not make any haste," said Monte-Cristo, smiling. "You believe then that Captain Joliette is still alive?"

"Yes, colonel."

"I am no colonel," said the count.

"Then I must say general?"

"That is unnecessary—I am in no way a soldier."

"But that is hardly possible," cried Coucou, disappointed; "such a nice brave gentleman, and not a soldier?"

"I cannot help you; but now tell me plainly whether

you can render me any assistance in finding the captain?"

"A thousand times, marshal, or as otherwise your title may be. You see, sir, I am a man of few words, but if you demand my heart's blood, it is at your service—the Jackal Coucou always keeps his word."

Monte-Cristo smiled—the man suited him.

"Sit down here next to me," he said, in a friendly manner, "and tell me all you know."

"To seat myself—no, that would be disrespectful; I shall remain standing; and now question me."

"Just as you like. Since when has the captain disappeared, and what do you know concerning him?"

"Accurately I cannot point out the time. On the last day of December, Abd-el-Kader, of whom so much is said, and who, I must here remark, much resembles you—"

"Quite a compliment," smilingly said the count, bowing.

"For Abd-el-Kader," interrupted Coucou, promptly. "Well, then, after Abd-el-Kader laid down his arms, subdued by Generals Lamoriciere and Cavaignac, we thought the war was ended; but God forbid, it had commenced in earnest. In confidence, sir, I believe in Algiers you will never hear of its end. That the Jackals at the affair played their game well is too well known; it was they who checked Abd-el-Kader.

"Well, on one occasion, we undertook a trifling skirmish, in order to send out some scouts; we had about twenty men, and Captain Joliette led us. 'Comrades,' he said, 'before we start, let us finally take care that the cursed Africans leave us at peace in future!' and then he

called my name—you must know he had always a little order for me to execute—"

"I conclude therefrom, that you found an opportunity to render him a service once," interrupted the count, in a friendly manner.

"H'm—the marshal knows his people," nodded the sergeant, proudly; "it was, in fact, but a trifle—a brown devil brandished his yataghan at the captain, and I cut off his hand to prevent the execution of his plan. Now, the captain also called:

" 'Sergeant Coucou!'

" 'Here,' said I.

" 'Coucou,' he commenced, quietly, 'one never knows how these skirmishes may end, and for the sake of life and death listen to me. Behold—I have yet a mother—she lives in Marseilles, in the Allee de Meillan, and is called Madame Joliette. In case something should befall me, demand a furlough, go to France and deliver this ring to my mother.' "

"A ring?" said Monte-Cristo, wonderfully moved, while he cast a hasty glance at Mercedes.

In a gloomy manner, but without saying a single word, Mercedes took a simple-looking silver ring from her finger, and handed it to the count, who looked at the simple precious thing with a tear in his eye—it was the wedding-ring which Edmond Dantes once presented to the Catalan, Mercedes.

"Pardon, Edmond," stammered the poor mother, with trembling voice, "I gave Albert the ring as a talisman—it was to bring him back!"

"I would not take the ring," continued Coucou. "I knew that nobody would so easily kill the captain, and

if misfortune should come to pass, it may, just the same, fall on me as well. But my refusing it was in vain, and so I consented to it. Discipline goes above all! We started and soon reached the defile; not a Bedouin could be discovered, and only a few distant barren rocks looked rather suspicious. Night set in; we thought of preparing our supper, but suddenly a curious noise could be heard, and the next moment we were surrounded by a swarm of Bedouins. A desperate combat began—the shots, following in quick succession, were enough to rouse the dead; but continually fresh combatants appeared, and we had trouble enough to fight for our lives. Upon a bare rock I suddenly espied a Bedouin, who had the barrel of his musket—God knows from whom he had stolen it—just pointed at the captain. I made a leap, reached the rock, and took hold of the brown devil, but at that very moment both of us tumbled down more than twenty feet, and I became senseless."

"But the captain?" asked the count.

"Only a little patience, you will know all I know. When I awoke again, it was just the dawn of day—how it happened that I did not break my neck is to me even now inexplicable. I looked about for my comrades; they ought to have been in the neighborhood. I called out—everything remained quiet; and thus I rose with painful limbs and reached the place where we had encamped. Here a terrible sight met me; before me lay all my comrades, bleeding and mutilated—they had all been beheaded! Even to this day I feel the terrible horror which overcame me at this sight—a dark pool of blood surrounded the rigid bodies, and if I were to live to see a hundred years, never shall I forget the awful spectacle.

"After a while I began to look about among the various bodies, and suddenly, in all my distress, I rejoiced aloud—the captain was not among the slain. Had the Bedouins carried him away? I called out. And only the hoarse cry of the hyena, which waited solely for my departure to fall upon the corpses, was the answer I received. I could not attempt to bury my comrades, for the ground was rocky and I possessed no tools for that purpose. I spoke a short prayer for the slain, supplied myself from their knapsacks with plentiful ammunition, and got back to the camp as well as I could.

"When I related there what had happened, nobody at first would believe me—they reproached me with cowardice and scolded me for having left my comrades! I became vexed; I demanded a detachment to accompany me and returned to the scene of horror. There a still more horrible sight met me—the animals of the desert had already eaten the corpses, and only bloody bones and portions of uniforms indicated the spot where the surprise had taken place. Now, of course, they all were ready to believe me; we sent out scouts to all sides in order to obtain traces of the captain. Large amounts were offered to Arabian deserters if they would deliver up their prisoners, but to no purpose; the earth seemingly must have swallowed up our captain. Only once I thought I had found some trace of him: a marabout—one of those brawny devils who are regarded as sorcerers by their countrymen—came to our camp to beg, or as we supposed as a spy. An officer inquired of the man in my presence about Captain Joliette, but he pretended to know nothing, saying he had never heard the name, yet his eyes betrayed his treachery—oh, these Ka-

byles are all desperate fellows, scoundrels of the worst description."

"Did you communicate your opinion to the officer?" inquired the count.

"Certainly; he at first laughed at me, and when he at last resolved upon the man being called a second time, he had already disappeared."

"What was the name of the marabout?"

"If I recollect aright it was Elak Achel, or something like it."

"Can you describe his appearance—had he bony cheeks, large, projecting ears, and a long, pointed beard?"

"Truly, I could almost believe the marshal must have seen the scamp," said Coucou, quite astonished.

"Ah, no, I only guessed at it. I know some races in the desert which correspond to the description you give. But another question: does it sound perhaps like Radjel el Achem?"

"Sapristi, that was the name! And now as we know his name, we will soon find him again," said Coucou, quite delighted.

Mercedes rose, encouraged by fresh hopes, but Monte-Cristo put his hand softly upon her arm and said:

"Mercedes, beware of being deceived. The words I have just spoken signify nothing—nothing but 'great sorcerer,' and are the general appellation of the people who operate in the south of the Algeric Sahara."

The words which Monte-Cristo quietly spoke did not fail to take effect upon Mercedes. She dropped her hands and stared sorrowfully through the window.

"Is that all you know?"—the count turned toward the Zouave.

"Unfortunately, no more," said Coucou. At the same time, however, being noticed by Mercedes, he made a sign and placed his finger upon the lips.

"In order to fulfil my promise," continued the Zouave, "I took a furlough and came to France. I had scarcely arrived in Paris when I was ordered to this place. I brought Madame Joliette the ring, and told her what I had experienced. Alas! if I could only find our captain again; but, I am afraid, it is almost impossible."

"Impossible!" called out Mercedes, throwing a supplicating look at the count.

"Sergeant Coucou," said Monte-Cristo, with earnest mien, "a man should never speak of impossibilities. I have often accomplished things which others thought impossible."

"Yes, if you, as our commander, would take the matter in hand, that would be quite a different thing," thought the Zouave, confidently.

"Well then, I shall do my best."

"Hurrah!—is it not so, I'm allowed to call you commander?"

"But I have already told you—"

"Let me only say so, and if you wish to oblige me, call me simply Coucou, and all will be well."

"I shall consider the matter. Now go down and wait for me in the street, I shall be there almost immediately."

"At your service, commander," said the Zouave, putting his hand to his cap, whereupon he left.

"Well?" inquired Mercedes, when alone with the count.

"Mercedes," said Monte-Cristo, with sincerity, "do not

despair. All my energy shall be devoted toward finding your son, and perhaps God will be merciful."

"I will believe it and not give way to despair."

"Then farewell, Mercedes! We will soon meet again. Now I am ready to look for Beauchamp, who, as I have heard, is again in Marseilles."

A knock interrupted the count—the door was quietly opened and a clear voice inquired:

"Are you alone, dear mother?"

Receiving a wink from the count, Mercedes said:

"Yes, Clary, you may enter."

The young English lady skipped over the threshold, but she stood still and blushed as soon as she saw the stranger.

"My dear little friend," said Mercedes, presenting the girl, "keeps me company in my desolation, and thus helps me to pass away many a weary hour."

The count bowed respectfully, whereupon he extended his hand to Mercedes and went away.

"Who is the gentleman?" asked Clary, as soon as the door closed behind Monte-Cristo.

"The Count of Monte-Cristo," said Mercedes.

"Was he the person whom you expected?"

"Yes."

"Oh, then be of good cheer," said Clary, putting her tiny hand upon her heaving breast; "something tells me that this man is almighty! Hope, Mother Mercedes —hope!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"SEARCH FOR THE WIFE!"

THE count found the Zouave outside the house in animated conversation with Madame Caraman. Coucou had a special predilection for the "female sex," and the widow of the sergeant saw in every blue-coat a comrade of her "blessed one."

"How do you do, madame?" Surely you are the companion of the beautiful little one up-stairs?" and he pointed at the house.

Madame Caraman nodded.

"Well, the little one is well cared for; I often wished that as much had been done for my education," continued the Zouave obligingly. The companion laughed and soon a lively conversation commenced. Both were very fond of chatting together, and when the count made his appearance, the Zouave grew timid and muttered:

"Dear me, the commander."

Madame Caraman responded respectfully to the Count of Monte-Cristo's kind salute; the count walked along the street and hailed a passer-by. Immediately a beautiful carriage with two splendid horses approached, and after the count had ordered Ali, who sat in front, "to drive around the town," he and Coucou got inside, where began the conversation in a friendly manner.

"So—now tell me all you know."

"Immediately, commander, but allow me in the meantime to remark that I never have ridden in such a splendid carriage."

"One must try all things," replied the count laughing; "if I have understood you rightly before it is concerning a report which has come to the knowledge of Madame Joliette."

"Quite right, commander. Do you see, in some things the ladies are very distrustful—"

"The long preface makes me conclude that it is concerning a woman," interrupted the count.

"Not exactly a woman, she was but a child not more than fifteen years at the utmost."

"And this child was Captain Joliette's sweetheart?"

"Alas, God forbid—no; that was not the case."

"Well make it short and tell the story."

"At once, sir," began the Zouave bowing. "One evening we had pursued a troop of Bedouins, and when night set in we were too far away from camp to reach it. We lay down in a hollow; the terrible howling of panthers and hyenas was the song to put us to sleep. Toward two o'clock in the morning I awoke suddenly—the moon had risen and I saw a large dark body close to the hollow pass by rapidly. I soon got my gun ready and fired. The sound woke the captain up and he inquired the reason. Ere I had time to answer, I heard a cry of anguish proceeding from above the hollow—in two leaps the captain reached the top of the rock and I followed him. The sight which presented itself was terrible. On the ground lay a white figure and close by was an enormous panther. The yellow glowing eyes of

the animal and its wide-open blood-red jaws terrified me —the captain held his poniard in the right hand and hit at all sides. I intended to fire at the beast, but man and beast rolled over and over again and I was afraid that I might hit the captain. Now the iron grasp of the captain had hold of the panther's neck—the animal howled fearfully, and the next moment the weapon of the man slit the body of the beast open. The panther turned over, a streak of blood drenching the ground; the captain, breathing heavily, sank down quite exhausted. I hastened to his assistance; the panther's paw had torn his breast and the wound caused him a great deal of pain, but when I tried to dress it he refused and said firmly:

"Look after the little one, Coucou, don't mind me."

I bent over the white figure; it was a beautiful girl, whose pale, wax-like face seemed to have become motionless from fright. Long dark hair hung over her tender cheeks, and on her white shoulder the paw of the panther had made a large open wound, from which the blood was flowing.

In the meantime our comrades had hastened to the spot: with their help the captain rose and his wound was washed and dressed. I did all I could to revive the child, but was unsuccessful. As soon as the captain could move again, he ceased thinking of himself, but continually aided me in my endeavor; bending over the wounded one, he whispered:

" 'I hope she is not dead.' "

"He is not the son of his father, but of his mother," muttered Monte-Cristo to himself, but in a louder tone he then said:

"Who was the girl?"

"I cannot answer who she was," replied the Zouave; "she could scarcely be persuaded to speak, and only after many cross-questions put to her we found out that she belonged to one of the tribes in the Sahara which we continually pursued. Her people ill-treated her, and she resolved to run away. While seated among the shrubs to rest herself, all at once she heard the growling of the animal close to her.

"What further happened," continued the Zouave, "I cannot tell; her wound was, thank God! not dangerous, and we took the poor child with us to the camp. Our camp was at that time at Laghouat, a small oasis, the springs of which were considered to possess medicinal properties, and the captain, together with the little one, were removed thither in sedans. Heavens! both were surprisingly beautiful—even unto this day I see this poor young child slowly lift her large dark lashes, and open her dark almond-shaped eyes. And the captain—oh, commander, his equal cannot easily be met with—he was in every respect quite different from his comrades! With him there were no love affairs, no debts; he never thought about himself, and in battle he was always at the head—a very pearl of an officer!"

A strange feeling came over the count as he listened to the praiseworthy words of the Zouave. Had Albert been his son he could not have been more proud of him. Monte-Cristo was not a man of ordinary nature, otherwise he would have shown bitter hatred toward the son of Fernand Mandego; but it appeared to him that the good qualities of the young man atoned for the faults of the father.

"What was the name of the girl?" he inquired afterward.

"Medje, commander; as soon as she was able to speak the captain inquired after her name. But when he observed that she, perhaps, might wish to return to her tribe, she sobbed bitterly, and tried to show in every respect how much she dreaded it. Who she really was we could never make out. In that cursed country it is quite different than with us. As soon as they can muster together ten people they imagine that they are a nation, and in need of a sultan. From some expressions of Medje we could form the idea that she was the daughter of such a sultan. The captain placed his hand over her, and I was present when he said to her:

" 'Medje, you do not seem to have a longing for your father; if you wish to remain with us I will take you under my protection, and I will care for you as if you were my own daughter.' "

"And what answer did Medje give to that?" inquired the count, eagerly.

"Oh, she kissed his hands, she cried for joy, and was really treated well by him. He acted toward her as though she were a little queen. She had her servants, and when the captain went out skirmishing he always reminded the comrades to take care of her, who accordingly were ready and willing to put their hands under her feet!"

"What became of her afterward?"

"Yes, that is the great point at issue. When the last expedition, from which the captain was not to return, was planned, Medje threw herself around the neck of her protector, and adjured him to remain back. The

captain laughed at her. She had no idea what discipline signified, and, sobbing, she repeated constantly:

"'Not go away, little papa—not going!'

"Ah, what would not I have given afterward had we taken her advice! When I alone returned from this unfortunate expedition, I was informed that Medje had disappeared the same night, almost at the same hour."

"Then the child was a spy!" exclaimed the count, displeased. "She knew about the expedition, and informed her people accordingly."

"At first I was of the same opinion, but later I changed it, because I found out that already previous to the expedition suspicious forms were swarming about our tents. Medje had accidentally seen one of these men, and, shrieking terribly, she ran away."

"Why did she not give warning to the captain?"

"Who could fathom that? Sure it was that a bold Bedouin, whose name was quite sufficient to set the whole camp in commotion, and who had been seen in the neighborhood, and—"

"What was the name of this Bedouin?"' inquired Monte-Cristo, eagerly.

"Mohammed ben Abdallah."

"He? Are you not mistaken?" the count inquired, rather excitedly.

"Oh, no, I have heard the name often enough."

"And you do not know who this man really was?"

"No—probably also a marabout, a kind of juggler or sorcerer."

"Did you acquaint your superiors of this sorcerer?" asked the count after a while.

"No," replied Coucou, rather hesitatingly.

"Then I am surprised that you acquaint me of this," said Monte-Cristo, while he threw a penetrating glance at the Zouave.

Coucou was silent—he could not explain even to himself wherein lay the great influence Monte-Cristo had over him.

"You saw Medje constantly," the count took up the topic once more; "have you never noticed anything striking about her?"

Almost frightened, Coucou looked at the count.

"Yes," said he, then, hesitating; "upon her two cheeks and on her forehead one could perceive a small red cross; it was tattooed by a skilful hand, and seemed to become her very well."

Monte-Cristo began to tremble.

"Do you know," he then said, "that Mohammed ben Abdallah is the most cruel enemy of France, and that he has taken an oath to take vengeance for Abd-el-Kader? If the captain has fallen into his hands then we shall never see him again, unless by a miracle."

"Commander, if you take the matter in hand, then a miracle will happen," said Coucou, confidently.

"We hope so—and now I shall ride to the hotel, and this evening at ten o'clock you may there inquire for me," said the count, quite loud; but he gently whispered: "Mercedes, I must save your son!"

CHAPTER XXXIX

DEPEND ONLY ON YOURSELF

ARRIVED at the Hotel de l'Univers, the count sent his card to Monsieur Beauchamp, and as the answer of the journalist was that the count's visit would be very agreeable to him, he went at once to Monsieur Beauchamp.

"Welcome in Marseilles, count," was the salute he received from the Parisian. "I am glad to see you again."

"I am also glad," returned the count, taking the proffered hand and shaking it heartily. "Well, what news in the political world?"

"Pah! let us not speak about that. On the 24th of February, as you are aware of, the Republic was proclaimed, and at first I really believed we had made an excellent bargain; but the joy was only of short duration. The people are but a makeshift to the leaders; they are asked to make sacrifices, yet not for themselves, but for others, and in the end— No, I had better drop this topic, for I really get vexed for nothing at all, and I only came here in order to forget! Tell me, rather, how I can serve you; and, if I am not mistaken, you take an interest in Madame de Morcerf?"

"Yes; but how do you come to know all this?"

"Oh—I know you, dear count. Wherever there is any grief to alleviate, a heroic act to accomplish, the Count of Monte-Cristo is always on the spot."

"You have a good opinion of me," said the count, deprecatingly; "and then, who was it that took care that the Zouave Coucou was sent here in order to console the poor mother?"

"Pah, that was only Christian duty; and besides, Captain Joliette bears among his superiors an excellent name. He was always the first in the midst of the enemy's fire, and his modesty, in spite of his bravery, has become proverbial among his comrades."

"And his disappearance?"

"For myself and all others this disappearance is really a puzzle. The Arabs seldom take prisoners, and I greatly fear that he has been dragged into the desert and killed."

"Do you, perhaps, know of what race the Bedouins were who attacked the expedition?" inquired Monte-Cristo, considering.

"If I am not mistaken, they were Yavaregs."

"Tell me what you think of the capture of Abd-el-Kader. Are you now of opinion that Algiers will be pacified?"

"Oh, no; either early or late there will probably be found another leader who, under pretence of avenging Abd-el-Kader, will renew the combat, for the Bedouins never submit."

"Your views tally exactly with mine, and I may almost say, to my sorrow, you are in the right. The leader whose appearance you expect is already announced!"

"You joke—should I be such a good prophet? But what is the reason that the ministry knows nothing of his existence?"

"Oh, a ministry fares in this respect the same as the husband of a frivolous woman: all others know more of what concerns him most than he himself."

"You may be right. What is the name of the new Bedouin leader?"

"Mohammed ben Abdallah."

"This name is quite strange to me. Are you not, perhaps, mistaken?"

"No," replied Monte-Cristo, coolly, "I know what I am speaking about. The man whose name I mentioned has sworn to accept the bloody heirloom of Abd-el-Kader and before four weeks have elapsed the revolutionary flag will again wave throughout all parts of the desert."

"Well, I shall not doubt any further; but tell me, in what connection does the soon-expected rising of the Kabyles stand with the disappearance of Albert?"

"Who is able to tell, Monsieur Beauchamp? But now I come to the chief point of my visit. You have influence in Paris?"

"Oh, dear count, had you only something to ask!"

"Perhaps I have. I should like to obtain an indefinite furlough for the Zouave Coucou."

"That shall be granted to you, you may rest assured."

"Thanks, more I do not want."

"But it is hardly worth while your applying to one who am in power for the moment, a support of the Republic, in order to obtain such a bagatelle. Consider, you may perhaps think of something else."

"Yes, and have almost forgotten it," said the count smiling, while he tore a leaf from his pocketbook and quickly wrote a few words.

"So," turning to Beauchamp, "permit me to hand you a small contribution for the poor of Paris—"

"Dear count," interrupted the journalist, quite moved, "if you consider a million francs a small contribution, then I should like to see your large ones."

"My dear friend," said the count, almost sorrowfully, "what is a million to me with my great wealth? The sun of a poor person overweighs my gift a thousandfold."

"Are you indeed so very rich?"

"So rich that in this respect I envy those who have yet anything to wish for."

"Well, who knows whether you may not one day find somebody richer than you. In the meantime I thank you in the name of our working-women, for while the men in the service of the Republic sacrifice their time the families at home are obliged to suffer."

"Distribute this money according as you think proper, and if you wish to favor me do not bestow any of it toward public collections. I dislike this ostentatious mode of benevolence."

"I am of the same opinion. But now tell me how will you be able to console Madame de Morcerf?"

"First step here to the window, Monsieur Beauchamp; do you see the yacht which has her steam up?"

"Yes. What is the matter with that fine ship?"

"It will depart for foreign parts to-morrow morning."

"And what is her destination?"

"Algiers."

"Ah, now I understand—you are sending emissaries for the discovery of poor Albert."

Monte-Cristo smiled and then said:

"Monsieur Beauchamp, if you desired to accomplish a certain thing to your satisfaction, how would you go to work?"

"Well, that is very simple, because I should attend to it myself."

"Then you will know whom I am sending to Algiers to find Captain Joliette."

"Have I understood you right? You are ready to venture into the desert? Count, you have undertaken a difficult task, and although I do not doubt your courage nor energy, I must nevertheless say that your resolution is a very bold one. In Algiers it is not only necessary to combat with men who hardly deserve the appellation, but also all the dangers of nature are there arrayed in battle against you! The simoom, the fatal breath of the desert, has put many a one there under the sand, and bleached bones caution the wanderer not to set his step on the deceptive ground of the Sahara!"

"Monsieur Beauchamp," replied the count earnestly, "if you were to know what I have already gone through you would not discourage me from doing my duty. What is that to the combat with beasts in human shape which I have stood victoriously? No, let me go and do my duty; I am not afraid of the Sahara."

"But the countess and her son?"

A shadow fell across Monte-Cristo's face, but his voice sounded clear and steady when he replied:

"Visit me this evening, and you shall have my answer."

"With pleasure. Where do you live? Here in some hotel?"

"Oh, no," said Monte-Cristo, smiling; "since a law-court has condemned me to pay a heavy fine because I had no domicile in France, I have come to a different conclusion."

"How is that?"

"Well, I possess now in every large town in France a house, and in Paris and Lyons and other chief towns a palace."

"Excellent—it is only a pity that this expedient is not at everybody's command. But when did this fine in money take effect? It was not I suppose in the law-suits you had against Andrea Cavalcanti, alias Benedetto? Yes? But do you know what I have heard? Benedetto is said to have escaped from Toulon. Take care of him; if there is a tiger in human shape, it is surely Benedetto!"

"I know it, Monsieur Beauchamp," replied the count, reluctantly; "Benedetto is the embodiment of evil principles—Satan in person! But one day I shall stretch out my hand and order him to stop—even if I have to go to the corners of the world to find him, he will not escape me."

"To that I respond amen. As to the Jackal Coucou, take him quietly with you. I shall take care to get him an indefinite furlough—he will render you good service, in the hell of Algiers which he knows as well as his pocket. But something struck me just now: accident, which often plays wonderful tricks, might bring you in contact with one of our co-workers, who, Heaven knows, roves about perhaps in Timbuctoo or even Zanzibar;

he sent me once a few good sketches about Abd-el-Kader, and then became an adventurer somewhere else."

"And this gentleman's name?"

"Gratillet."

Monte-Cristo wrote the name in his pocketbook and then said:

"If I should happen to find Gratillet, I shall not forget your recommendation."

"Thanks beforehand. Gratillet is a curious fellow, and I shall not feel surprised if you meet him in peaceful transactions with a panther. He is not afraid of any kind of devil."

"Then he is the man for me."

"And if you can prevent his entering upon further follies, you will, no doubt, do it? I should like to establish a large journal, and Gratillet is in this case indispensable to me."

"I shall do my utmost; although—the Sahara is great."

"But God is greater. Then I shall be with you this evening. Where can I find you?"

"Only inquire for the Palace Monte-Cristo, and now adieu till later. Who knows whether you will not now accompany me to Algeria!"

"Oh, I should certainly not feel indisposed, but my duties chain me to France; the battles which are still to be fought here require my presence."

The gentlemen separated, and while the count ordered the porter to show the Zouave, should he inquire for him, to the palace of Monte-Cristo, Beauchamp muttered: "If there are any magicians then I have seen one to-day!"

CHAPTER XL

THE SACRIFICE

NOT far from the harbor, with a beautiful view of the sea, the Villa Monte-Cristo lay. It was like all dwellings of the count, rich and elegantly furnished, and a splendid terrace with exotic plants could readily induce the inhabitants to believe they were really in a tropical region. Parrots of many colors swung on the branches of tamarind-trees—the sycamore rustled, and leafy bananas and beautiful palm-trees reflected their branches in the blue waters of the Mediterranean sea.

On the evening of the day Monte-Cristo arrived in Marseilles, the count sat with Haydee on the terrace. Both seemed delighted with the splendid panorama before them, and from time to time the count rose to look after Spero, who, bending over a book, sat reading in the adjacent conservatory. Now, Monte-Cristo remained with Haydee, who in her usual way was leaning back in an ottoman, and putting his arm around the young woman's neck, he whispered:

"Haydee, look at me!"

The shining dark eyes which beamed like stars gazed steadfastly upon the noble face of her husband, and the small white hand glided softly into his.

"Haydee," said Monte-Cristo, earnestly, "do you believe in me?"

Haydee raised herself half sorrowfully.

"Do I believe in you?" she repeated, rather vexed; "are you not my master, my god? do we ask the slave if he believes in his employer?"

"Haydee, I am not your employer, and you are not my slave."

"You are my husband, my all! Oh, could you read in my soul, you would not question me in this manner. Listen. I was present when my father was betrayed and murdered—they tore me from his corpse and dragged me to the slave market, where grief and death awaited me."

Haydee continued: "Then you appeared—like a god you stepped before my tearful eyes, and from that moment I lived for you only in the world! You purchased me and I became yours—yours in body and soul, and daily I bless the hour when first I saw you!"

Haydee drew her husband's hand to her lips, and then in a low tone continued:

"All my thoughts and contemplations since then were centred in you—at that time, being afraid you would remove me from you, I was on the point of taking my own life!"

"Haydee, what are you talking about?" muttered Monte-Cristo, confused.

"In truth—do not try to deceive me—you intended to give me in marriage and bestow my hand on somebody else!"

"Who knows whether it would not have proved fortunate for you?" whispered the count sorrowfully.

"Oh, Edmond, you break my heart with such words!

How could I, separated from you, be happy? I live, I breathe for you only, I honor you not only as my husband, but as the greatest, noblest man!"

"Haydee, you make me blush—I am weak and sinful the same as others!"

"No, oh, no! If you, as a chastening angel, caused the guilty to vindicate themselves, and recompensed what is good; you seemed to me almost god-like. You raised me to be your wife; to you I am indebted for the greatest happiness of a woman, the happiness of possessing a darling child, and Spero is the more dear to me as he promises to be your very image."

Monte-Cristo threw a timid glance at Spero, who was still diligently reading by his lamp, and then cordially said:

"Haydee, then you never regretted having bestowed your hand on me?"

"Never."

"I have never caused you any pain?"

"None—I am the happiest of women."

"And if circumstances occurred which would compel me to give you pain?"

"Then I would submit to your intelligence and not complain."

"Also if I were to destroy your happiness forever?"

"Even then—I would live in the past and be rich."

"Then listen to me, Haydee—we must separate."

"Separate?" repeated Haydee, leaping up terrified and her eyes filling with tears.

"Yes—for some time—a few months."

"Thy will be done," uttered Haydee sighing; "I know

that a sacred duty calls you away, and God will strengthen me to bear the trial!"

"Thanks, Haydee, for this word—it will accompany me when I am away from you!"

"And to what place does your duty call you?"

"To Algiers—in the desert! I am obliged to return a son to his mother, or even die, if circumstances should become mightier than my will."

"To Algiers? But why am I not allowed to accompany you? You know that with you I am not afraid of any danger, and—"

Haydee became suddenly silent. She noticed that her husband's eye, remarkably sorrowful, turned from her and Spero, and bending her little head she whispered:

"Forgive me. I know that I dare not leave Spero."

Monte-Cristo trembled. The most difficult was to come yet.

"Haydee," he then said, softly, "you cannot accompany me. I shall explain to you immediately why it cannot be. Not because you dare not leave Spero—"

He stopped short. The expression of terror in Haydee's beautiful eyes benumbed him.

"What do you mean by that?" she ejaculated, pale and trembling. "You do not intend to rob me of my last consolation, do you?"

"Compose yourself, Haydee. Remember the words which you uttered just now. Yes, I leave you, and take Spero with me."

"Spero—to go away with you!" groaned the young wife, with panting breast; "oh, my lord and master, that you cannot really mean! You do not wish to kill me, and—"

"Haydee, you once told me your life is in my hands."

"That I am still ready to acknowledge. Here is my poniard. Kill me, but leave me my child!"

In consternation the young wife pulled a dagger sparkling with diamonds out of her waist, and offered it to Monte-Cristo.

"Strike!" she said, with faltering voice. "What good am I in this world if you and Spero leave me? Well, why are you hesitating? Take my heart out of me, but leave me Spero."

She knelt at Monte-Cristo's feet, and embraced his knee.

Suddenly her eye flashed, and she cried, animated with fresh hopes:

"Indeed, my beloved, I think you only intended to try me. You will not crush me; you will be persuaded. Oh, make an end of this torment. Tell me that you do not wish my death."

"Haydee," replied Monte-Cristo, with stern forehead, "you know that I only fulfil my duty, and instead of assisting me to smooth the path for me, you refuse to bear your share of the burden."

"I do not understand you," uttered Haydee.

"I must depart, and Spero has to accompany me; but if I do not consent, my dear Haydee, for you to accompany us, it is for the reason that you have a mission to fulfil here."

Haydee remained on her knees, but her tears ceased.

Oh, what mastery did not this man exercise over her! The heart was ready to break, and yet she could not do otherwise; she was obliged to obey him.

"Haydee," remarked Monte-Cristo, quietly, "surely

you do not believe that I give you pain unless compelled to do so?"

"No, oh, no," sighed the young wife, throwing herself in his arms. "Speak, what is to happen?"

"Listen. Behold, ten years ago I brought you to Monte-Cristo, and there disclosed to you my past. I explained to you how I punished the guilty, and you told me I acted rightly. At that time I vowed to be efficacious henceforth wherever I am able to protect the innocent in order to atone in case I carried my zeal too far. Among others who suffered much from my vengeance were Mercedes and her son. You know the love I bestowed upon this Catalonian, and I have not concealed from you that the rage of being disappointed in her furnished my arm with weapons against Ferdinand Mandego, the murderer of your father.

"I stretched out my hand, the avenging flash of lightning struck, and Ferdinand Mandego died—his wife and his son felt the heavy blow in all its bitterness, but the further consequences of my deed I had not considered! Albert de Morcerf has disappeared, his mother despairs, and it is myself who have chased him to death! Haydee, should you like to see your husband a hangman?"

"Oh, Edmond, do not speak thus! You did not intend anything wrong; you are great and noble!"

"No, I profess to be so, and that is my crime. I made Albert de Morcerf suffer for the deed of his father; I clothed myself with divine majesty and exercised justice with human hands! Do you now understand, Haydee, that I must stake my life, in order to restore to Mercedes her son, that I, who punished others, may become reconciled with myself?"

Haydee sighed—she was conquered.

"But," commencing anew with trembling voice, "also I am a mother, and my son—"

"Your son, Haydee," interrupted Monte-Cristo, with flaming eyes, "your son shall be made worthy of you. The world calls him the son of the Count of Monte-Cristo —let him be deserving of this title! Spero is noble and courageous; he knows what is good and evil, and his pure heart I am proud of. To be just he believes to be his aim—to be just means to combat for what is good. In the midst of approaching dangers you never saw me trembling; with firm step I faced all danger and death; and Spero shall be trained to act in the same manner. The terror of the desert shall not make him turn pale—he is to face danger and learn to become worthy of the mission his father began, in order to accomplish it. 'Noble be man, efficacious and good'—may this poetical phrase be his shield, and may God guide him in his ways! Answer me, Haydee—is Spero to accompany me?"

"Yes," escaped in a low tone, like a breath, from the lips of the young wife.

"Thanks, Haydee; now listen as to what your mission consists of. You are yourself a mother—and you will know how to console a mother. Mercedes—enter!"

The door leading to the terrace opened, and Mercedes with tottering steps approached Haydee.

"Haydee," said Monte-Cristo, turning toward his wife, "here is Mercedes, whom you have known through me for some time."

Haydee hastened toward Mercedes with extended arms.

"Be welcome, dear friend,' she accosted her with a sweet, melodious voice.

"Oh, how beautiful you are," muttered Mercedes, looking at the young wife admiringly.

"Madame," stammered Haydee, blushing, "I give you my most valuable possessions, my husband and my son."

"Your son?" repeated Mercedes, with emotion.

"Spero—come this way," said the count.

The boy sprang toward him—Mercedes looked at him and sobbed bitterly.

"Papa, why is she crying?" whispered Spero.

"Because she is reminded of her son who is in peril of death," replied the count significantly.

"In danger of death?" Spero repeated quickly; "oh, papa, why do we not hasten to his rescue?"

Monte-Cristo lifted the boy joyfully in his arms and kissed him passionately.

"How is it," said Haydee, alike proud and sorrowful, "will you leave me, Spero?"

"Oh, mamma—to hasten to aid the unfortunate is our first duty, and you yourself have taught me it," replied Spero, embracing the young wife.

Now Bertuccio appeared.

"Count," said he, "here is a soldier who desires to speak to you!"

"Ah—the Zouave Coucou—let him come in!"

The Jackal entered and inquiringly looked around—yes, here it was almost as nice as in Africa.

"Coucou," the count commenced, "I have obtained for you an unlimited furlough."

Coucou scratched his head.

"Well—is it, perhaps, not acceptable to you?"

"Not exactly that, commander, but what am I to do

in the intervening time? Africa's sun, the Bedouins, the Jackals, nay even the Hyenas I shall miss."

"Well, perhaps we can find a remedy—to-morrow at daybreak we depart for Algiers."

"To Algiers—is that true?" joyfully exclaimed Coucou, throwing his cap in the air and making a salute, which perhaps was not fashionable, but nevertheless significant.

"Excuse me, commander," he stammered, placing his hand on his cap, "I am overcome with joy! God be praised, now we shall find my good captain!"

"That I also hope, Coucou."

"But how is it with her ladyship, commander?" asked Coucou doubtfully; "is she satisfied?"

"Ask her yourself," said Monte-Cristo.

"Madame," Coucou said turning toward Haydee, "you have a brave husband, and as long as Coucou lives nobody shall touch a hair of his head!"

Haydee smiled amid her tears, and the count said:

"Coucou—here is my son, he will accompany us!"

"The little fellow—*Sapristi*—that is grand! the young gentleman is the little corporal—do you like the title, my young master?"

Spero, clapping his hand joyfully into the proffered one of the Zouave, cried out laughingly:

"I shall do my best to earn my epaulets!"

"Go now, Coucou," said Monte-Cristo, "and do not fail to be at the harbor at six o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I will not fail, commander."

The Zouave, placing his hand to his cap, went away.

CHAPTER XLI

HOW AND WHERE COUCOU TOOK LEAVE

IN a beautiful garden, adjacent to a small splendid villa, Clary Ellis this evening walked irresolutely to and fro. Madam Caraman, with whom the young girl had a lively conversation, had retired, as she stated, to work on the veranda, and Clary was reflecting on the conversation.

When the young girl had, in the afternoon, seen the count at Mercedes', she had become quite inquisitive to know something more about the stranger; the way and manner, however, Mercedes answered her questions in nowise satisfied her curiosity.

The count was an old friend of the family, was Mercedes' answer; he had known her son, previous to going to Africa, and he had always felt a lively interest for him.

Clary had accepted this explanation without putting confidence in it; she saw that Mercedes tried to hide something from her and that vexed her.

Madame Caraman had the next day called for her *protégée*, and in walking home together, she said:

"Do you know, Clary, what I have heard to-day—the Count of Monte Cristo is said to be in Marseilles."

"Well, what is there remarkable in that?" Clary calmly asked. "Have you not seen him then?"

"Seen him—where?" responded Madame Caraman, stupefied.

"Dear me, he just left as I came to Madame Joliette. You were waiting outside the house and could not have failed to see him."

"Oh, Lord! could the gentleman who rode off with the Zouave have been the count?" remarked Madame Caraman, quickly.

"No doubt; a slender, pale man, with dark hair."

"That I should not have known it!—where must my eyes have been?" lamented Madame Caraman, and in the meantime both had reached the villa, and Clary said carelessly:

"Please come with me in the garden, Madame Caraman; I like to hear more particulars about this Count of Monte-Cristo."

"But, Clary," said the French lady with astonishment, "have you never heard of the count? What do they read yonder in England?"

"Oh, various matters—but what has this to do with the count?"

"More than you think of; you have stocked in your little heart a great deal of ballast, and neglected the most necessary things. Do you know the author Alexandre Dumas?"

"Only as far as the name is concerned."

"H'm—I thought so; yes—France does not for no purpose possess the credit of being at the head of civilization."

"But Mamma Caraman, when are we then to return to our subject, the count?" asked Clary, impatiently.

"At once. Alexandre Dumas has written many romances, and one of the most interesting is 'The Count of Monte-Cristo.'"

"Mamma Caraman," said Clary, vexed, "how is it that you intend to dish up for me such a childish fable?"

"But I am speaking seriously; Dumas has rendered more service for the general education of the people than ten ministers. In his 'Three Guardsmen,' for instance, one gets thoroughly acquainted with the histories of Richelieu, Anna of Austria and Louis XIII., in a very interesting manner. In the 'Count of Monte-Cristo' the shortcomings and faults of the government after the overthrow of the great emperor are unsparingly exposed, and in the same way every work of the great novelist offers special merits. The more I think of it the more clearly I understand it, that we also have in your friend, Madame Joliette, a character of the novel before us. Her name is Mercedes, and she is no doubt Madame de Morcerf. And the name of her son?"

"Albert."

"Well, there it is; the father was a scamp, who shot himself, the son and the wife resigned their possessions and then disappeared from society. It will perhaps be best if I send the servant to a library to get the romance; I wager that you will not put the book aside till you have perused it all through?"

Clary nodded and ten minutes later she sat with glowing cheeks and beating heart absorbed in the reading of this interesting novel. She sympathized with Edmond Dantes and Faria, she wept with Mercedes, she hated Villefort, lamented for Madame Danglars, was enthusiastic for Valentine, admired Maximilian and breathed

much easier when Madame de Villefort, the inhuman poisoner, had ended her evil career. And over all these personages hovered in wonderful glory the modern knight without fear and blame, the chastising judge, the noble benefactor. Monte-Cristo seemed to the young girl like a god, and when darkness set in and Madame Caraman looked about for her *protegee*, Clary embraced her and said, sobbing:

"Oh, Mamma Caraman, how beautiful is the romance and how happy do I feel to have seen the count! Yes, so, just so, he ought to appear; oh, Alexandre Dumas is a great man!"

Madame Caraman smiled; she did not expect anything else. Both ladies conversed then more explicitly of the various persons in the romance, and afterward the companion withdrew, as already mentioned, to the veranda to work, and Clary remained, absorbed in a reverie, sitting in a little pavilion ornamented with flowers.

How long she had been meditating she was unable to tell, when all at once without the garden wall a curious noise was heard. Clary lifted her head and listened; the reading had excited her to the extent that at this moment a spectral appearance would have come not unexpectedly and yet she quite plainly noticed a sparkling pair of eyes, which inquiringly turned in all directions. Clary did not stir. A cloud, which up to that moment hid the moon, broke, and the girl recognized the Zouave, who sat upon the wall and then slipped down into the garden. Coucou seemed to know that he was trespassing upon strange ground; he listened for a while, and as everything seemed quiet he selected the walk which led to the veranda.

At the veranda a lamp was burning, and close by stood a basket filled with various skeins and balls of wool, while Madame Caraman sat in her chair snoring comfortably. The Jackal remained motionless at the foot of the veranda and looked up, and as nothing seemed to move, he soon resolved to climb the fence, which was closed by the stairs leading into the garden.

As soon as the Jackal saw Madame Caraman, he became rather agitated; he thought of his mother, and yet he was aware that this lady appeared far younger and more elegant than his mother, even were she alive. With his hands folded over his breast, he looked at the sleeping woman; he did not anticipate that Clary, hid behind a tamarind-tree, watched all his movements and almost broke her head in considering what motive brought the Zouave to this spot.

Now Coucou approached the companion, but the noise woke Madame Caraman, and uttering a half-suppressed shriek she jumped up and looked drowsily at the intruder. She recognized only the form of a man, and instinctively grasping after the first object at hand, she took hold of the work-basket and threw it with all her might at the Zouave. The basket hit Coucou's head and clapped itself like a helmet over his face, while the wool skeins became entangled in his hair, tickling his nose and causing a violent cough and continual sneezing.

The lady now first recognized the brave Jackal, and considering the awkward situation he was placed in, she could not help bursting into a loud laugh. In vain Coucou tried to rid himself of the wool threads; he coughed and sneezed uninterruptedly, and the basket seemed to cling more tightly to his face. At length the French

lady took pity on him and helped him to remove the basket, and then in a voice of merriment which she could not suppress she said:

"Well, Monsieur Jackal, you will perhaps tell me what induced you to come here?"

Coucou was ready to answer, but the wool threads prevented him, and while Madame Caraman again broke out laughing, and Clary, below in the garden, suffered from suffocation, because she felt obliged to suppress her laughter in order not to betray her presence, the Zouave breathlessly gasped:

"One—drop—of water—I suffocate!"

Madame Caraman was not cruel. She handed the Jackal a glassful of water, and as the cough would not stop, she took from the sideboard a bottle filled with cordial and offered it to the soldier with these words:

"There, drink a drop, you big scamp, and then explain your presence here."

The Zouave cast a grateful glance at the lady and took a long draught out of the bottle.

"Sapristi!" he then exclaimed, smacking his tongue, "that is an excellent drop!"

"Bah, never mind the drop now, but answer my question," rejoined the lady. "What are you looking for here?"

"I—intended—"

"Quick, and do not stutter so awfully. Is it lawful at night and in darkness to enter a strange abode and to frighten people?"

"Alas, I shall certainly never do it again," stammered poor Coucou, crestfallen. "I came here, because—"

"Dear me, I almost believe you have lost your power of speech," laughingly interrupted Madame Caraman.

"Not exactly, madame, but behold, there are moments in the life of a soldier—"

"In which he proves himself especially stupid," added Madame Caraman impatiently; "stick to your subject."

Coucou bowed, as if a compliment were paid him.

"Madame," he commenced again, "Providence permitted us to-day to meet each other—"

"Providence?" repeated the lady in great merriment; "Mr. Zouave, you seem to me to be getting a little crazy!"

"Oh, madame," said Coucou ardently, "it will not offend you, if I tell you that I find you exceedingly—and, speaking plainly, consider you quite lovely! Call me impertinent, madame; but believe my assurance that I speak the real truth. I have seen ladies in all parts of the world, blondes and brunettes, black and white, but I never met one who understood how to win my heart till I this day met you!"

Madame Caraman was, indeed, Clary's governess, but she was, first of all, a wife, and Coucou's words were repugnant to her.

"Monsieur Zouave," she replied, "I am forty-two years old" (unwittingly she skipped a few), "and you may call yourself lucky that I do not mind a joke—"

"A joke? But I can take an oath—"

"Do not swear," interrupted the lady, in a menacing manner, "but let me speak. First, you ought to know that I have always been an honest wife, and only loved my husband, who is now in heaven. Secondly, I am

employed by a greatly esteemed and amiable young girl, and as you have without the slightest pretext entered here, you have forfeited the respect which you owe the owner of this villa. Thus you know now what you ought to know, and mark it down for the future, Monsieur Zouave."

Coucou felt as if it were best for him to sink into the ground; red like a peony he began to stutter:

"Pardon me, I intended nothing wrong!"

The widow of the gendarme officer had compassion on his embarrassment.

"Well, do not take it to heart too much," she said, kindly. "I do not bite anybody! You are, after all, a soldier, and if you do your duty, you cannot always touch everything with kid gloves. My dear departed husband often told me so, and therefore console yourself and listen to me. I am ready to pardon you, but only under one condition."

"Oh, under all conditions, even ever so difficult," ejaculated Coucou, lively. "Speak, please; what am I to do?"

"Not much, but to tell me, quite openly, why you have come to this place this evening?"

"Only to see you."

"Indeed! Well, I must confess I like you! So you have fallen in love with me, like a student at a boarding-school, and in order to satisfy your suddenly aroused desires you creep at night into other people's houses! Do you know how these fellows are generally styled?"

Coucou bent his head, and Madame Caraman earnestly continued:

"Would it not be more simple and also more becom-

ing, if you were to come here to-morrow by daylight, and ask for admittance?"

"But that is just the thing," despairingly exclaimed Coucou, "for me there is no morning!"

"What does that all mean?"

"Well, what I say is, that for me there is no morning here!"

"Lord and Saviour, how am I to understand this nonsense?" said Madame Caraman, impatiently.

Coucou changed his tactics.

"Madame," said he with emphasis, "I will admit that my uncalled-for entrance here was certainly quite wrong, but you ought not to consider it in the light of an offence."

"I hope so," replied the companion respectfully, "and I am ready to look for any proofs thereof."

The Zouave again looked down quite abashed.

"It passed previously through my head," he commenced, rather discouraged, "that you perhaps would show a little interest for me—"

"Always worse—you are getting impertinent!"

"No, no, madame, that I am not; only allow me to explain. Consider, I am a soldier; the regiment is my home, and I have neither father nor mother who care for me. Taking it all in all, I do not mind that; I fight with the Kabyles, and when one day my end approaches, nobody will have to mourn for me. But you appear to me so kind and trustworthy, that Satan urged me on, and as I shall probably never see you again—"

"Ah, and why not?"

"I bid you farewell, for to-morrow morning it will be all over."

"Well, not so hasty; don't jump immediately from one extreme to another," scolded Madame Caraman, who against her own desire felt some sympathy, although she tried to hide it; "tell me now exactly the whole proceeding; otherwise you seem to be a brave fellow, and it would be a pity for the uniform you wear were it not so. Well, then, speak out; what is the matter to-morrow?"

"Alas, madame, your kindness encourages me. Only consider, if a man is on the point of leaving his home, and perhaps forever, he is longing to say to somebody good-by, and when on such an occasion a beautiful woman shakes hands and says, 'Farewell, my boy,' then it surely brings luck!"

"But, Monsieur Zouave, you speak in riddles to me. Where are you going, if I may put the question?"

"To Algiers, in the desert, and then further."

"But you are returning to your regiment?"

"God forbid. I have an unlimited furlough."

"By my life, it requires a corkscrew in order to get the words out of your mouth! Plainly told, what mean all these preliminaries?"

"Well, you know already that the son of Madame Mercedes, Captain Joliette, has disappeared. I am attached to my captain and—"

"Quick, make haste, I am fast losing all patience!"

"To-day a pale-looking man with sparkling dark eyes, and coal-black hair and beard, told me that he starts to-morrow morning in order to search for Captain Joliette, and intends to take me with him!"

Neither the Zouave nor Madame Caraman heard the half-suppressed exclamation, which had just occurred

close to the veranda; Madame Caraman felt astonished, and rising suddenly asked almost breathlessly:

"If I understand rightly, then, the Count of Monte-Cristo intends searching the Sahara for Captain Joliette?"

"Yes, that is the case, and I accompany him. For such an expedition courage is the first requirement, and, as I do not lack any, the count has selected me. Now, you know all and wherefore I came; I did not wish to vex you, and now I depart again. Adieu, Madame Caraman!"

The Zouave swung his cap and turned round ready to depart. The lady looked at him with mingled feelings; she was a kind-hearted soul and the brave Zouave amused her. She never had a son, but she thought, if God had presented her with one, he ought to have resembled the Jackal. That he came to bid her good-by, moved her, and she said in a half-audible voice:

"Monsieur Zouave!"

Coucou remained standing.

"Come this way! Are you, perhaps, afraid of me? On previous occasions you were less timid."

Coucou's hesitating steps justified this suspicion, and Madame Caraman continued, smilingly:

"I shall not hurt you; there, put your hand into mine—" Coucou blushed like a girl.

"What? I should be allowed to put my ugly paw into your hand!" he stuttered quite confounded, and then he perceived that he had been again rude and tried to excuse himself.

"I spoke of my ugly paw—I—"

"Never mind that," the lady interrupted him; "there, shake hands and think that I am your mother!"

"You my mother?" said Coucou laughing, with tears in his eyes; "oh, no such thing; then you must act differently! When I took leave of my poor mother, she took hold of my head and kissed me heartily on both cheeks! I believe I have to thank these kisses that I still carry my head between my shoulders!"

Madame Caraman wiped a tear from her eye, and then she took the head of the Zouave between her hands and did exactly like his mother.

"Hurrah, Mother Caraman," called out Coucou joyfully; "you are an excellent mother! Farewell, and if God spares me, I hope we may meet again!"

"I hope so, my boy," said Madame Caraman with faltering voice. "God protect you and grant that you may again find your captain! It will all be right in course of time—adieu!"

The Zouave made two long strides in getting downstairs, and in a moment he had reached and climbed the garden-wall. Placing himself upon it, he swung his cap, and calling aloud, "Adieu, Mother Caraman," disappeared.

"A real Parisian boy," muttered Madame Caraman to herself; "a hot-headed fellow with a golden heart. It would grieve me should I not see him again."

A soft hand now touched the lady's shoulder, and looking up she perceived her *protégee*, who stood before her smiling.

"Is it you, Clary," said the companion rather awkwardly, while she changed color and became red and white, by turns, "you have then—"

"Seen and heard the Zouave," rejoined the young girl, laughing.

"But I can assure you—he came—I am not answerable—the garden-wall—"

"I know, I know, Mamma Caraman," interrupted Clary. "You do not think that I am going to reproach you? So Coucou goes to Algiers?"

"Yes, in order to search for Captain Joliette; the count—"

"I know all," said Clary, hastily placing her finger upon the governess's lips; "they are going, but it is all chance—"

"Yes, all chance work in a desert. It is terrible! Think only of the simoom, the sand, the Kabyles, and the wild animals!"

"Have you the map of Algiers at hand?"

"Yes, here is the atlas."

Clary knelt close to the chair of the governess, who had the atlas on her lap, and after they had studied minutely all the mountains and deserts of Africa, she suddenly inquired:

"How do people travel in the Sahara?"

"In caravans, with camels and negroes. It is a troublesome journey, dear child, and—"

"Mamma Caraman, how much money have we at present in hand?" suddenly interrupted Clary.

The governess drew a pocketbook out of her workbasket, and, examining the contents, said:

About three hundred pounds sterling, or seven thousand five hundred francs."

"That is very little," said Clary.

"We have besides bills of exchange to the amount of one hundred thousand francs."

"What may be the time now?"

"Nearly ten o'clock, Clary."

"Well, then, please have our horses ready."

"Our horses, at this time?" said the governess, alarmed.

"Yes, at once. Hurry your toilet; I shall do the same, and then good-by."

"But, Clary, what do you intend to do?"

"Mamma Caraman, I am not yet quite clear upon that point, but on the road to Marseilles you shall know everything. Apropos, take the three hundred pounds with you."

"You are not thinking, surely, of spending the money this very evening?"

"H'm, who knows. At any rate take also the bills of exchange, and now go and make haste."

Clary soon got away, and the astonished governess had no other alternative than to obey the orders of the spoiled child. Ten minutes later both ladies sat in their saddles, and rode, accompanied by a groom, toward the town.

CHAPTER XLII

IN THE SPIDER'S WEB

IF ONE passes in Marseilles from Main Street across Villeneuve Place, and turns into Prison Street, there appears a dirty old house just opposite this street, which upon a signboard bears the appellation: "The Big Spider." This house is a resort for sailors of the worst kind, and, as soon as darkness sets in, becomes crowded with customers, whose physiognomies are anything but encouraging. The worst of vices found here in the Big Spider their formation, and the scum of all parts of the world used to assemble here. In fact, the whole surroundings of that quarter were nicknamed "The Spider Quarter," and many a one who had entered the quarter with well-filled pockets never left it again. The "Spider's web" closed upon him, and he was lost; for the walls never betrayed what passed behind them, nor did the inhabitants feel any desire to do so.

In the dark smoky rooms alcoholic drinks were the principal beverage, and characterless women shared and indulged in the drunken revels. Continual strife and quarrels in which the knife was the chief weapon were always going on, while the police took good care not to come into contact with the guests of the Spider. At

present, of course, the Spider's Quarter has ceased to exist, and one who nowadays perceives the well-lighted streets will hardly believe what a place it formerly was—*tempora mutantur*. While the Zouave Coucou took leave in the villa, a mixed company, like on all other nights, had gathered together in the Spider. English, French, Maltese, Italians and Spanish sailors sat round the heavy oak tables; girls in curious dresses, whose painted cheeks showed plainly the traces of debauchery, thronged around a female card conjurer, who in a corner was performing her black art, while a woman with a harp was waiting with her old instrument till called upon to play or sing before the company. Here and there sat groups of men and women on whose foreheads vice was plainly written, and according as the dice rolled and the cards dropped, there could be heard curses and imprecations, as well as shouts of joy. The atmosphere was impregnated with the filthy oil of the dimly lighted lamps, the odor of alcoholic drinks, and the poisonous smell of tobacco.

It was almost midnight when a new-comer entered. The man wore a short jacket, a red girdle held the dark trousers around the waist, and a broad-brimmed oilcloth hat sat at an angle upon a head full of rich red-blond hair. The beard of the man was red and thick, while his form showed that he was possessed of great muscular power.

It was plain that the stranger was an English sailor, and the sharp accent with which he gave his orders to the morose landlord, of whom he demanded a mixture of rum and cordial, testified to this supposition. The host, who was a suspicious-looking individual with piercing black eyes, which wickedly squinted from under a

pair of peculiar thick eyelashes, soon brought the drink to the sailor, and while placing the tin can containing the hot beverage on the table, he held out his right hand to receive payment; for in the Spider the rule is: "First pay and then you may drink." The sailor did not seem to relish this custom; he drew a heavy purse from his pocket, took out a gold piece and threw it on the table.

While the host took the gold piece, a louis d'or, and curiously looked at it, more than twenty eyes turned greedily upon the sailor; the customers of the Spider knew well the sound of the gold pieces. Out of pure mischief the host tried the sound of the gold piece again on the tin can, and then smilingly placed it in his pocket: again, suspicious looks turned upon the man who paid in gold, and their bewilderment was increased as the stranger refused the change. "Keep it for yourself," said he, loud enough to be heard. The landlord, who understood many languages, shook his head and dryly replied:

"Keep your money, old fellow—I only take my due."

The Englishman felt vexed, struck with his fist on the table, took hold of the tin can and emptied the drink with one draught.

"You decline my money?" he asked with a strong English accent.

"I do not say so," added the host, in a half-satisfactory tone, "but to-day and to-morrow do not resemble each other, and what you bestow on me to-day you may rue to-morrow."

"That concerns no one but myself," exclaimed the sailor; "if I like to be generous, I have a right to be so. Yes or no—will you accept the money?"

"No, braggart, I do not need your money! The host of the Big Spider is richer than you!"

"Richer than I am? Who the dickens can say so?" ejaculated the sailor in a rage, and pulling out his purse and opening it he threw all its contents on the table. A heap of gold rolled on the oaken surface, and with loud shouting the guests around the table jumped up.

Only the landlord looked upon it indifferently.

"Englishman, you are a fool," he muttered half aloud; "you wish to be duped under all circumstances! Beware!"

"Shut up," shouted the sailor, and turning toward the rest, he said in a low voice:

"Do you know what the host has just whispered to me? He cautions me to be on my guard; he seemingly believes that you intend to murder me in order to get my money!"

A death-like silence followed these bold words, and the eyes of all present turned with unmistakable eagerness upon the heap of gold. Most of these miserable beings had already often bathed themselves knee-deep in blood; and therefore to commit murder was a bagatelle, as long as it brought profit.

The landlord, shrugging his shoulders, returned to his place near the door; he would let the sailor take his own part, if he really wanted to be stupid.

Now, a large fellow, a Provencal, approached and placed himself on a seat right before the Englishman, and was at once ready to take hold of the money.

"Old fellow," said he, grumbling, "is that lot of money really your own property?"

"Yes, all honestly earned money."

"H'm—that I care for but very little. Do you know, I am just at present short of cash, and I suppose you will not hesitate to lend a friend a helping hand, eh? Well, then, I'll take just what I am in want of."

The hand of the Provencal selected a few gold pieces, but almost at the same time he shouted aloud and staggered back.

The sailor, with a vise-like grip, grasped the wrist of the intruder and he soon dropped the gold pieces.

The Provencal gnashed his teeth in rage, and, rubbing his bruised wrist, muttered:

"If you do not wish your sinful money to be touched, then you should not expose it so boastingly! You will not even assist me a little? It stands to reason that later on I will pay you everything back: well, are you satisfied?"

"No," replied the sailor coolly, "go to the devil! Away—do not touch my money; I can skin you!"

"Ah, that we shall soon see," loudly exclaimed the Provencal, and putting his hand in his pocket he produced a large knife. At the same time he uttered a few words to his comrades in their own jargon, and immediately the sailor was surrounded by a dozen men whose hands were armed with glittering knives.

The Englishman seemed, however, not in the least affected; he put the money all in one heap, and placing himself with his back toward the wall, he crossed his arms over his chest, and asked, scornfully:

"What do you mean to do? Are you really ready to murder me?"

"Keep your peace, braggart! You wish to entice us with your money. Give us half of it, or you will not fare very well here. Well, are you willing to divide?"

"I don't know about that. If anybody in my part of the country says 'I will,' then he must prove that he is also able."

"What does this all mean? Do you think of defying us?"

"I am ready for you. Just come on, if you think proper!"

"Stand back, comrades!" exclaimed the Provencal, "I will teach him something better. Just wait, John Bull, you will soon know me; I'll get the best of you, and then we will divide the spoils."

"Yes, yes!" the others cried, "let us divide!"

"Keep quiet," said the Englishman, coolly. "You want a regular fight with knives, do you? Pah, I have no objection; but you will allow me, instead of using a knife, to make use of this weapon!" and thereupon he drew from his pocket a small, brightly polished poniard about three or four inches long, which looked more like a lady's plaything than anything else.

The shabby lot laughed at him loudly; and, comparing the Catalonian knives they handled with the sailor's poniard, it appeared like a sewing-needle.

"Perhaps you think I am a tailor?" said the Provencal, scornfully; "and have you not also a measure in your pocket?"

"Large words, large knives, and that is all," said the sailor, contemptuously. "Listen. I make you an offer: if you can touch me, the money is yours; and, mark well, not only half, but the whole of it!"

"Agreed. Comrades, step aside!"

With a push of his foot the Provencal cleared one of the tables; the rest did the same in putting tables and

chairs aside for an open space. The host alone remained passive; he had seen enough of these occurrences, and was in nowise astonished. Even the female portion of the guests seemed to take an interest in the combat; everywhere you could see glittering eyes awaiting the spectacle to come, and now and then the call went forth: "The impertinent fool!" "Well, the Provencal will teach him better!" "Just look, the poniard is set with diamonds!" "Where could he have stolen it?" "Perhaps from his sweetheart. Ha! ha! ha!"

One of the guests, however, did not share in the general noise. He was a man who sat at a side table, his head resting in both his hands, so that his face could not exactly be recognized. Raven black long hair, slightly tinged with gray, fell down on his broad shoulders; the man wore sailor's clothes, but they looked tattered and worn out. Before him stood a large, half-emptied bottle of liquor. He sat motionless, and, in spite of the noise around him, remained at the table without stirring. The glance of the English sailor was at different times directed toward him, and it even seemed as if he wanted to speak to him, but nobody noticed it.

Now the Provencal approached the Englishman. It was quite a sight to see him standing with spread-out legs, half-naked, hairy arms, muscular chest, the knife lifted up in his right hand, and a vulgar smile on his thick lips, and many a one would have considered twice before he ventured on such a task. His age was, no doubt, about forty, and his glaring eyes glanced continually from the Englishman to the gold, and then again at his comrades, as if intending to say:

"Just be a little patient, I'll procure the prize for us."

The Englishman too had arisen. His slender figure appeared almost meagre when compared with his opponent, and yet his dark eyes looked around steadily and quietly. Either he plays with the danger threatening him, or he is not able to see it; one stroke of the Provencal was sufficient to batter down the Englishman, and what use is the neat little weapon in comparison with the terrible large knife?

"Are you ready?" shouted aloud the Provencal.

"Yes, bandit," sounded loudly in reply.

The sailor leaned with his back to the wall; a retrograde movement was impossible, and yet—yet the Provencal began to press him closely. The knife glittered—a jump—and the Provencal shrieked with pain and sank to the ground. The poniard of the Englishman had penetrated deeply into the hand which held the knife; a dark stream of blood flowed from the wound, when the sailor drew out the point of the blade, and the Provencal screamed in his agony:

"Wait, miserable juggler, you will suffer for it."

Breathing heavily he stepped back a few paces, and again swinging his knife, he threw it quickly at the face of the sailor. The sailor had lifted his left hand, and in a second struck the weapon as it fell; the knife whirled around, and the next moment the Englishman caught it in his hand. Triumphantly he swung round the knife in his left, and the poniard in his right hand; the Provencal uttered a heavy curse, and withdrawing the knife from a comrade standing behind him, he prepared to again attack his opponent.

The Englishman allowed him to approach; but as soon as he was ready to jump at him, he threw away poniard

and knife, took hold of the Provencal by his wrists, and as easily as if he were but a child, pitched him right in the midst of bottles and glasses, placed upon a table some distance off.

The Provencal howled with rage; and the breaking of the bottles and glasses scattered glass all over the place, causing many bloody hands and heads. The giant bled from a wound on his forehead, and, turning to his comrades, he called aloud:

"Kill him, ye *canaille!* Can you look on quietly when he is killing me?"

Irresolute, the crowd stared at the sailor, and he, taking advantage of the momentary quietness, jumped over tables and benches into a corner, where the solitary guest sat, and placed his hand upon his shoulder:

"Up!" he called with penetrating voice, "up in the name of Manuelita!"

As if touched by an electric shock, the man jumped up, and, throwing one single glance at the sailor, he gave a yell and leaped right in the midst of the vagabonds, and with herculean power he knocked down all who were near him, crying with rage:

"Away with you, bandits! Whoever touches a hair on this man's head dies!"

As soon as the men heard the voice, they remained standing as if petrified, and even the most courageous turned pale.

"Jacopo!" went from mouth to mouth. "What the devil brought him here? Let us hasten to depart. See only how his eyes are rolling; he is once more in a passion!"

The other must have been aware of his ruling power

over these miserable vagabonds, for he pulled the door open and peremptorily ordered them to leave the room, saying threateningly:

"March off, or I'll get you all on the galleys again, which you ought never to have left!"

"We are going; pardon us!" cringingly replied the men; and like beaten dogs they all left quite hastily.

The Provencal lingered a while at the door.

"How about the money?" he inquired, in dog-like submission.

"Throw it to the bandits outside the door, Jacopo," said the sailor, despisingly.

Jacopo took the money in both hands and scattered it in a large circle on the street.

Howling, shrieking, and with a tremendous noise, the bandits fought for the booty. Jacopo locked the door, closed the latch, and kneeling before the sailor, whispered: "Master, what is it you demand of me?"

CHAPTER XLIII

MANUELITA

WHO was Jacopo?

About nineteen years before, in February, 1829, Edmond Dantes—a prisoner for life in the Castle d'If—owing to his energy, escaped from his jailers, sewed up in a sack which had contained the corpse of his friend, the Abbe Faria. He was dragged by the jailers to the churchyard of the Castle d'If, and there buried. The churchyard of the Castle d'If, however, was the ocean! The waves were more merciful than man; they gave the deserted one a friendly reception, and washed him close to a ship, a genuine tartane, where in despair he called out for help. He waved the red sailor's cap which a sympathizing gust of wind had thrown down from a rock, and the men on board of the tartane saw it. "Courage!" they called to him. With a weak, despairing grasp he took hold of the rope which had been thrown toward him, and then became insensible.

When he came to he lay on the deck, and sympathizing sailors bent over him. They administered rum, they rubbed his benumbed body, and he who had first seen the unfortunate man put his own woollen jacket around

the man's shivering shoulders. This sympathizing sailor was called Jacopo; he was a powerful young fellow, with laughing blue eyes. When Edmond Dantes had recourse to stratagem, and, in order to remain alone at Monte-Cristo, leaped from the rock, it was Jacopo who picked him up, and only against his will left him again.

"Who knows whether you will not one time become a captain? Has not your countryman Bonaparte become emperor?"

Hereupon Jacopo almost went into hysterics; how could he become captain? no, so high he never climbed even in his boldest dreams; he felt satisfied if he only continued to have a place on the deck of a ship; then the ocean was his home, his family, his all!

Edmond Dantes has the name Jacopo fixed in his memory. He will, no doubt, have an after opportunity to reward the brave fellow.

Years had passed when the Count of Monte-Cristo began to recollect the brave Corsican. He searched for him and said:

"Do you remember a sailor whose life you once saved, and who prophesied that you would become a captain?"

Jacopo blushed; no, he has not yet forgotten this prophecy.

"I knew this sailor," continued the count, "and received of him the commission to cancel his debt to you."

"His debt?" exclaimed Jacopo, not knowing the meaning thereof.

"Yes, your dream points to a captaincy, and I have the order to realize this dream."

"You! oh, do not make fun of me—"

"What are you thinking of? Look here, Jacopo, do you see this yacht which is now riding on the waves?"

"I see her. She appears to me slender and beautiful —she is a pearl of a vessel."

"I am glad that the yacht is to your taste; she is my property, and I appoint you as captain, if you have no objection!"

Jacopo became almost wild with joy. During the next few months the elegant yacht, called the Ice Bird, moved her wings actively, crossing every sea, and the captain was delighted with her.

When the count came to Paris to investigate the fate of the families Villefort and Danglars, Jacopo received his dismissal, or rather his temporary freedom.

"Master," he asked, sorrowfully, "why do you send me away? Have you to complain of anything concerning me?"

"No, Jacopo; but at present I do not need the yacht any further; I intend for a time to remain in Paris."

"Well, at any rate, I will always be ready to obey your least hint," said the Corsican, with enthusiasm. "Command me, and I shall at once honor your call."

"How who knows?" said Monte-Cristo, laughingly.

"What do you wish to say by that assertion, master? Do you believe Jacopo will be remiss in fulfilling his promise?"

"Who knows?" repeated the count, still laughing, and then, drawing out his pocketbook, he said in an earnest tone: "Jacopo, you have a secret."

"I?"

"Why avoid my question? Your blushing cheeks convict you of untruth, and then you ought to know

me sufficiently; you know that my looks can penetrate the innermost depths of thy soul."

Jacopo bent down his head, turned the cap in his hand confusedly, and became red like a red garden flower.

"Am I to tell you that I am able to read you to the bottom of your heart?"

"Master—"

"I read there a name—"

Jacopo trembled, and grasped a chair to support himself.

"It is the name of a woman."

"Master, master, I entreat you not to mention the name. I suffer enough without that."

The count's countenance grew gloomy.

"Jacopo," said he, peremptorily, "I am forbearing if anybody places confidence in me; irreconcilable if any one seeks to deceive me. I keep silent if you wish it, but we are forever separated. Farewell, you will never see me more!"

He turned to go, but the power which this singular man exercised over others was so great that Jacopo broke out into loud lamentations. He preferred to suffer anything rather than consent to perpetual separation.

"Say, master," he said, with a sigh, "am I able to leave you?"

Monte-Cristo smiled.

"You are a child," he then said. "You cannot bear to hear anybody speaking of your love, because you are forever separated from her."

"Oh, master, then you know everything."

"Listen to me, I am ready to tell you all that I know. There below, in the Catalonian quarter of Marseilles, lives a fisherman's family. Brave and diligent, they were never ashamed of their calling. They have worked day and night with boat and net, and accumulated a nice amount of property. The family consists of ten persons: father, mother, seven sons, and one daughter live in the modest but decent hut. The sons are strong and courageous fellows, who are not afraid of anybody; the daughter is charming with her dark curly hair, her glowing sloe-black eyes, and her marble white skin. Jacopo, am I to tell you the name of the little one?"

"Manuelita"—it sounded gently like a breath from the lips of Jacopo.

"You have liked this beautiful child since you first saw her, and one day you took heart and you went to Manuelita's father—"

"Who turned me out like a beggar," interrupted Jacopo, gloomily.

"That he did not do," continued the count, coolly. "He told you quietly, Manuelita will not become a poor man's wife."

"And perhaps that was no insult?" continued Jacopo, vehemently. "All people cannot be rich."

"But Manuelita's father has also told you something else?" asked Monte-Cristo, quietly.

"Oh, yes," replied Jacopo, bitterly; "he called after me that if I came back with twenty thousand francs, then Manuelita should be mine. I earn such wealth! He was making sport of me."

And Jacopo stamped angrily and uttered a heavy curse.

Monte-Cristo looked at him reflectively. Then he took a leaf from his pocket-book, which he held in his hand, and offering it to Jacopo, said:

"Here, take this."

"What am I to do with it, master?" asked Jacopo, astonished.

"Well, can't you read any more?"

"Oh, yes; I read an order for 20,000 francs to which your name is affixed."

"And payable at—"

"Thomson & French, in Rome."

"You perhaps doubt whether these gentlemen will honor my signature."

"Oh, master, your signature is as good as ready cash!"

"Well, then, go to the first banker you can find and have the check cashed."

Jacopo looked at the count quite bewildered, and thus the conversation about Manuelita was ended, and his master gave him simply an order.

"Am I to deliver the cash to you, master?" he asked, not being certain yet.

"No, not to me."

"To whom, then, otherwise, master?"

"To nobody."

"Yes, but, dear me, what is the money for?"

"You shall keep it."

"I?"

"Yes, you yourself."

"And what am I to do with it?"

"You have to look for Manuelita's father, show him the money, and remind him of his pledge."

Pale, not able to utter a word, Jacopo stared at the count; Monte-Cristo waited a moment, and then said, smilingly:

"Have you now understood me?"

"No, master—I do not comprehend—"

"Nay, one might almost believe that you have not a grain of sense. The amount is your property—you have deserved it honestly."

"I deserve it? Oh, you make sport of me! If I have done my duty, that is my best recompense."

"Yes, for your services as captain of the yacht. But there are also other services which cannot be paid for; submission, honesty, and courage cannot be paid for in gold, and in spite of the 20,000 francs I remain still your debtor."

"Oh, master, you make me feel ashamed!"

"Jacopo," said the count, sorrowfully, "do not speak like that. Of what value is money to me? I can give you still more, but to what purpose? You have enough to be happy; you have had a dream of domestic happiness, try to realize it! Your desires are moderate; you intend to work and be useful from morning to night, and as the only reward for your labor you require Manuelita's love. Have you any further wishes, my brave man?"

"No, none; only Manuelita!"

"Then take her, and be happy!"

Jacopo stared yet at his master rather doubtfully.

"What is it to be, Jacopo, yes or no?"

Instead of answering, Jacopo kissed the hand of his master.

"All right, Jacopo," said Monte-Cristo. "I only require one thing of you."

"Oh, speak—speak only!"

"I know, in case I came in a few months to Marseilles, you will hesitate to accompany me."

"I hesitate, master? How can you believe that? My life belongs to you!"

"No, Jacopo; from the moment you call Manuelita yours your life belongs to her. Do not take any oath, for you will never keep it. Did not even Peter deny the Lord three times? and Peter had no loving wife. In six, in twelve months, the thought of leaving Manuelita will surely make you unhappy; I know man, and I know you."

Jacopo looked toward the ground rather ashamed; he was aware that the count had spoken the truth.

"Nor do I demand that you should leave her."

Jacopo breathed a great deal easier.

"What am I to do?" he inquired hastily.

"Swear to me that, at any day or any hour I should call on you in Manuelita's name to assist me, you will follow my orders!"

Jacopo lifted his right hand on high.

"Master, I swear it to you," said he, solemnly.

"I trust to your oath; go and be happy."

Overcome with joy, Jacopo hastened to Marseilles, soon reached the Catalonian quarter, and greeted Manuelita with a bright smile.

The father of the beautiful Catalonian was on the point of becoming vexed when he saw Jacopo, but soon became almost dumb when the Corsican waved a well-filled purse and reminded him of his promise.

Scarcely a month elapsed before the marriage was celebrated, and happy Jacopo led the beautiful Manue-

lita to the neat abode which he had prepared for her.

There have passed days and months full of undisturbed happiness. Jacopo has bought a barge and baptized her Manuelita; he has sailed on the blue ocean and returned with a rich harvest of fish; prosperity reigns in the little cottage on the strand, and Manuelita is beautiful as the young day.

The count appeared one morning, when Jacopo was just ready for his fishing excursion.

"Will you accompany me?" he asked, laughingly.

The Corsican flushed, and Monte-Cristo said in a consoling tone: "Quiet yourself, I am only joking; what I want of you to-day will take only a short time."

That was at the time when the count ordered Jacopo to bring his farewell wishes to Valentine and Maximilian.

When the Ice Bird with sails unfurled left Marseilles, Jacopo felt somewhat dissatisfied with himself, and sometimes it appeared to him as if Manuelita had changed. Beautiful and lovely she still appeared, but her manner made some impression on Jacopo, and by degrees he found that others also thought his young, lovely wife had undergone a change. First, it was only hinted at, but afterward the talk spread and became louder that Manuelita deceived her husband; she loved another, Jacopo's friend. Jacopo did not at first mind this talk, but one evening he saw Manuelita fly at Parlo and offer him her sweet lips to kiss, and it enraged him to think that the people were in the right. He mastered with superhuman exertion all the thoughts that surged within him, and nobody might know that he was aware of the

disgrace of his wife, nor that he contemplated an awful revenge. Why Manuelita betrayed him none could tell! He was a most faithful and indulgent husband; he would have gone for the beautiful Catalonian into the fire, and she—the lips which she offered him were soiled from the adulterous kisses of Parlo—the arm which she placed round his neck had also embraced Judas lovingly—she was a monster in enticing form. From this time, when Jacopo realized Manuelita's faithlessness he resolved to destroy her and her lover, and that the boat which bore the name of the faithless wife should become the instrument to carry out his revenge!

One morning Jacopo said to Manuelita:

"The weather is delightful; I think I shall take a fishing cruise. Will you accompany me?"

Manuelita hesitated; she thought perhaps Parlo might visit her.

Jacopo noticed her hesitation, and said with a smile that tore his heart into pieces:

"I have also asked Parlo to accompany us, because he is such good company!"

Manuelita's countenance began to beam, and Jacopo suffered the pains of torment when he perceived it, but took heart and said coolly:

"I shall in the meantime go to the shore to see whether the nets are all in proper condition."

He went, and when he returned after a while, and accidentally threw a glance at the window, he found Parlo in Manuelita's arms.

Pale as death and with tottering knees the unfortunate remained almost petrified on the spot; and when he revived a little and came ten minutes later into the

house he appeared gay, and nobody could guess what anguish of soul he suffered.

"Are you ready?" he inquired quietly.

"Yes," nodded Manuelita.

"Then let us go; the nets are all ready."

Like an automaton Jacopo walked along the shore between the guilty pair; he mechanically answered questions, and when Manuelita offered her lips for a kiss after being helped into the boat, he had sufficient power over himself to touch with his lips the false mouth.

The boat glided through the blue waves of the ocean; Manuelita's dark curls played with the wind, and Parlo was intoxicated with joy as he looked at her. Jacopo sat at the rudder and looked inquiringly at a small dark cloud which appeared on the horizon some distance off and quickly neared them.

The Corsican allowed the boat to go with full sail before the wind, and soon nothing but the sky and water could be seen.

Parlo and Manuelita, engaged with each other, did not perceive the change in the weather, and when they heard in the distance a hollow, rolling sound they quickly arose to their feet.

Manuelita trembled, and lifting her beautiful eyes to Jacopo she inquired anxiously:

"Jacopo, is there a storm coming on?"

"Pah," replied the Corsican reassuringly, as he threw his net into the sea; "it is of no importance."

Jacopo was an experienced seaman; when he said the storm did not signify, you could depend on it that he was right. Manuelita saw that Jacopo was quite unconcerned, and looking at the roaring, rising waves she

again grew calm and again watched Parlo. He also seemed careless; he laughed and joked, and, behind Jacopo's back, stole many a kiss from his beloved.

A bright flash of lightning came down; the thunder rolled, and the black, cloudy wall rose ever higher on the blue horizon. Jacopo, however, did not mind it; he hummed a Corsican fisher-song and dipped his net into the sea. That he always drew it out empty did not trouble him; from time to time he threw unnoticed a glance at the others and gnashed his teeth.

Suddenly a heavy gale caught the foresail and tore it to shreds; the mainsail was also destroyed, then the foresail fell to the deck.

With a loud cry Manuelita sank on her knees and Parlo cried out terrified:

"Jacopo, we are lost!"

"Save us, Jacopo," sobbed the Catalonian; and then she made the sign of the cross and muttered a prayer, while the storm increased in fury.

Jacopo remained motionless. He took an axe and lifted it high in his right hand, while the boat tossed like a nutshell and the noise of the storm deadened all other sounds.

"The boat is too heavy," muttered Jacopo to himself, and swinging his axe he cut off the mizzen-mast close to the deck. Neither Parlo nor Manuelita said a word, and, engaged only with each other, believed that Jacopo was trying to save them, and only as the mast heavily struck the waves realized their peril.

The storm now absolutely controlled the light boat and twisted her round here and there. Jacopo lifted his axe again and cut down also the foremast.

"Parlo," shrieked Manuelita, desparingly, "save us—we drown!"

Parlo pretended that he did not hear these words, for Jacopo's curious fixed look had put him on his guard. Manuelita, overcome with fright, forgot everything, and, clasping her hands around Parlo's neck, she sobbed out:

"Save me—oh, save me, Parlo!"

Jacopo swung his axe afresh, but this time it remained deep in the keel of the ship, and now light dawned on Parlo. Jacopo meant to destroy them.

"Hold on, Jacopo," he called aloud despairingly, and tried to take hold of the axe.

The Corsican said not a word, but he, with his axe uplifted, kept Parlo at a distance, and then cut again into the keel, till a loud creaking was audible.

Jacopo had at last succeeded in his object—gurgling and roaring, the agitated waters rose through the leak in the ship, and Parlo shrieked like a madman.

"Jacopo—you carry us to destruction!"

Jacopo's pale features became at last animated; he threw himself on Parlo, grasped his shoulders, and, forcing him on the floor of the boat, pressed his knee on his chest.

"Manuelita," he called, with a voice which sounded through the storm like a trumpet, "you shall be happy with your lover, miserable woman!"

Manuelita heard the words—she saw the quick rising flood—she saw Jacopo kneeling upon Parlo's chest, and she understood all—all!

Higher and higher still rose the water, and now Jacopo laughingly left his rival—he was drowning in the waves.

Manuelita raised her folded hands in entreaty—then came a last shriek, a hoarse laugh, and the boat sank, never to be seen again.

The next day the sea was serene and calm in the splendor of the rising sun, and a man engaged in fishing noticed a motionless body lying on the strand. Alarmed he hastened to lift up the body and recognized Jacopo!

Singularly enough, life was not quite extinct; the fisher brought the half-dead man to his house, and under the careful treatment of kind neighbors Jacopo soon revived as far as his body was concerned, but his mind remained affected.

A few days later the corpses of Parlo and Manuelita were driven on the strand, and now what had caused Jacopo to become insane was no more a riddle—had he not in one day lost the wife and the friend?

Jacopo's madness was of a quiet kind; for hours he could sit on the shore and watch the playful movements of the waves; sometimes he bent over the blue waters as if he were in search of something, and then he shook his head sorrowfully. One day he sat again during a heavy gale on the strand; he saw a boat in which two men and a woman were sitting fighting with the waves. In his eyes light began to dawn all at once. He plunged into the water and soon had reached the boat. Breathless stood the people who saw it and noticed all his movements, and now they found him swimming toward the shore, holding a human figure in his arms, and loud hurrahs and rejoicing met him for his courage.

He had succeeded in saving the woman; the two men found a watery grave. In expectation of something, he

knelt down by the woman, and when she opened her eyes Jacopo uttered sorrowfully:

"It is not her," and then departed.

From this day Jacopo's madness was broken; he certainly roamed about for days on the strand, but the veil which had clouded his mind was torn, and only when a storm raged it came over him like inspiration, and he ventured courageously upon saving the lives of those in danger.

Thus not a week passed in which Jacopo had not found opportunity to save people from shipwreck: the inhabitants on the strand surrounded him with a godlike veneration, and whenever a vessel was in danger there he was on the spot. Heaven seemingly favored him; hundreds he saved from a watery grave, and soon his word on the strand became quite an authority.

In course of time Jacopo began clearly to remember the entire affair as it happened on that eventful morning, and in order to drown those recollections he became a drunkard. In this state he was found by the English sailor, in whom, no doubt, the reader must have recognized the Count of Monte-Cristo; also Jacopo knew the voice of his beloved master, and his heart became animated with fresh hopes when he called him to his help. As Jacopo knelt before the count, Monte-Cristo put aside the long, entangled hair which hung down over the Corsican's face, and, in a sorrowful tone and compassionately moved by the sight, said to him:

"Jacopo, you have suffered heavily!"

The Corsican sobbed bitterly, and the count continued: "How long it is since I saw your bright face on the strand; at that time you were happy in the possession

of Manuelita, and to-day I find you broken, despairing, and—alone!"

Jacopo could only go on sobbing, and hot tears came down his pale, haggard cheeks.

"You have killed Manuelita," whispered the count softly.

Jacopo trembled.

"Who has told you, master?"

"Don't you know that I can read your soul?"

"Yes," nodded Jacopo. "I have killed her!"

"And do you regret the deed?"

"This question I cannot exactly answer," observed Jacopo timidly. "I was for a time insane, and often I wish I were so even now; the clouded mind was bliss compared with the terrible recollections which now break my heart! Oh, what wouldn't I give to have courage enough to take my own life; but I lack that courage; I suffer terribly, I cry, I wring my hands, and yet I live. Oh, the cowardice! who will save me from myself?"

"I," said Monte-Cristo, earnestly.

"You, master? Yes, you are almighty, and if you like you are able to pull out of my bleeding wounds the painful darts which are tearing my heart. Pity me, count, and I am free!"

Monte-Cristo's look rested pitifully upon the unfortunate, and his voice sounded soft and mild when saying:

"Jacopo, only to save you I came here."

"I feel it, I know it; oh, how kind you are!"

"Jacopo, when man is carried away by his passions and has done evil—what you have done was bad, because

you did not possess the right to judge Manuelita, and you feel it by your remorse—then there is only one remedy, to atone for the sin—"

"Oh, mention the remedy, master! It is singular, but since I have looked into your eyes and heard your voice, I have the feeling that the bloody fog which darkened my eyes had disappeared. I breathe again more freely, and my head is clear as it was previously, when I passed days on the ocean and saw nothing above me but heaven and sun. Master, tell me, what am I to do?"

"So much good, that the evil may disappear before it."

"Alas, if I could do that! I have killed, and I am lacking the power to raise the dead."

"And if you could nevertheless atone for your crime?"

"Master, I hear your words, but their meaning is clouded for me; please speak plain to me, that I may understand you."

"Jacopo, life and death are related together, which, however, a secret and indissoluble union connect with each other. Not for nothing have I put you to the test; when I visited this cursed place, when I sounded my gold pieces, it was only because I wanted to find out whether misery had also corrupted your soul."

"Oh," replied Jacopo, contemptuously, "it does not say much to have remained an honest man."

"You are too modest, Jacopo; I have found you again as I left you ten years ago; now, listen, will you accompany me?"

Jacopo trembled all over.

"Leave Marseilles?" muttered he, in half-suppressed

words; "oh, master, if you only knew that it is my sole and only joy to wander on the strand, and to contemplate that blue ocean which swallowed her up!"

"Jacopo, I have come here for the purpose of fetching you, as I am in want of you. I have to undertake difficulties; my way leads into foreign lands, on ways where death and crime are on the watch, and I have counted on your assistance. Shall I have been mistaken?"

Instead of an answer Jacopo made a bow, and taking the hands of his master, kissed them.

"Thanks, master," muttered he; "I am yours in body and soul!"

"Good, Jacopo, I know you!"

"When do we depart?'

"To-morrow morning."

"And where am I to meet you?"

"On board of the Ice Bird."

"I shall be there."

"I depend on your word; remember my prophecy, that death is the fountain of life, and that your sin disappears when God gives you grace to save the lives of others! Farewell for to-day, by daybreak we meet again."

Monte-Cristo left the liquor store, the Spider and Jacopo looked after him with a glimpse of new awakening hope in their eyes.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE HUMORS OF A LADY-MILLIONNAIRE

WHILE Clary and her governess rode to Marseilles at a late hour, Madame Caraman was devoured with curiosity; but she was, nevertheless, sensible enough not to ask any question of her stubborn ward. When, however, the young girl spurred the horses continually on the governess felt uneasy; she had, besides, often the sensibility of a hen who has to bring up a young duck, and therefore she ventured to make slight objections against the uncommon maddening speed which, owing to her heavy size, became every moment more troublesome to her.

"Clary, at this hour to ride to Marseilles! What would Lord Ellis say to it? I have undertaken a sacred cause, and—"

"Do not trouble yourself, Mamma Caraman. I shall answer for all."

"Also when we break our necks?"

"Even then."

The governess was silent, not because she felt convinced, but owing to the want of breath. By degrees she got used to her present situation, and one does not read Alexandre Dumas in vain. Could there be anything more romantic than this night trip? The moon lighted

up trees and shrubs with a fine white light, and they thus appeared as spectres, who in a maddening quick fear fly along.

"It is a great pity that he of blessed memory cannot behold me thus," muttered Madame Caraman to herself; "he would, no doubt, have rejoiced over me."

Now the town was reached, and Clary adopted a more moderate pace, while she and her companion turned into Troailles Street. Before a palace-like house a halt was made, and through Madame Caraman's head passed suddenly a correct supposition.

"Ah, we intend then to pay a visit to the firm of Mortimer & Co.," said she, with surprise; "a strange hour, and the bank will probably not be open yet."

Clary did not mind the remark, and she ordered the groom to get down from his horse and to knock. John, being used to obey punctually the orders of his young mistress, knocked with both fists at the closed gates, and Clary nodded her consent to it.

"Listen, Clary," said Madame Caraman, suddenly; "there is dancing in the house."

Indeed they could now plainly hear the sound of excellent music, and in the well lighted windows of the first story one could perceive here and there something like light shadows passing by.

Ere Clary could answer, the porter appeared and opened the gates, asking the pleasure of the cavalcade.

"Tell your master," said Clary, imperiously, "that I wish to speak to him at once."

"Oh, dear, that is impossible," stuttered the servant, stupefied; "the office is closed, and will only be opened again to-morrow morning at eight o'clock."

The porter was now ready to lock the gates again, but John had already, at a wink from his mistress, placed his horse between the gates, and, good or bad, they had to be left open.

"Please ask your master to be kind enough to come down at once," said Mademoiselle Ellis, peremptorily.

"Excuse me, mademoiselle, do you belong to the ball guests?" asked the man, shyly.

"Ah, is there a ball in the house?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; Mortimer & Co. give their only daughter in marriage to-day; if, then, mademoiselle is invited?"

"No."

"Then mademoiselle came upon business matters?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Then I am really sorry that I cannot announce mademoiselle; my orders are very strict."

"You refuse to obey me?"

"I regret very much, but—"

"In this case I must myself try to procure a hearing. Back!"

Ere the frightened porter could hinder it, Clary had given the horse the spurs and they crossed the threshold. Madame Caraman followed courageously, and then they stopped in the midst of the vestibule, ornamented with exotic plants, candelabra, and various hangings of the richest and rarest description. A number of lackeys felt perplexed when they perceived so unexpectedly the beautiful horses stepping on the carpets placed in the fore-court; some dozens of hands were stretched out in order to stay the horses, but they played a wrong game.

Not in vain was an ancestor of Miss Clary victorious

in a combat with the Highlanders; her grandfather as well as her uncle had manfully subdued Tippoo Sahib, and her father had carried the victory at the last Derby. With her horsewhip she frightened the intruders, and Clary gave her horse the spurs again; in a moment the young girl and her governess rode upstairs! In the hall where the ball was given the *elite* of the most elegant society in Marseilles were gathered together; all the notables which the English colony of that place could muster were there, as well as all those in high office, and also the moneyed aristocracy; in fact, everybody of standing felt glad to attend the marriage feast of the house of Mortimer & Co. Just now the sounds of a quadrille commenced, and the various pairs began to arrange themselves for the occasion, when the lackey in attendance was pushed aside and a horse's head looked inquisitively into the ball-room.

It was a horse, surely and truly a horse—there was no doubt about that! The animal that put its proud-holding head into the ball-room had a silver bit, and its fine, cunning eye rested quite astonished upon the elegant company; who also, almost petrified with astonishment, came to a general standstill.

The lady of the house broke into shrieks, while Mortimer with his hands prevented further intrusion.

And yet what he saw was after all not so terrible, for an exquisitely beautiful young lady sat gracefully on the four-footed intruder, and a pair of provocative eyes shone brightly under a riding hat ornamented with rich feathers.

The wife of Lot, however, could not have been more torpid than the company in Palais Mortimer, especially

when behind the first horse's head a second one appeared, and Madame Caraman became visible.

Mortimer thought he was dreaming. Was his ball-room then turned into a riding-school?

Miss Ellis did not give him much time to become horrified; she bowed politely before the banker, and said:

"Mr. Mortimer, if you please, I have to speak to you!"

Well, although the banker was an Englishman he was not a friend of horses, and while he with some anxiety looked at the splendid horse and its rider, Clary's animal forgot its manners so far that it commenced without the least ceremony to scrape upon the heavy carpet as if it were in Hyde Park or Rotten Row, and also Madame Caraman's horse neglected the rules of etiquette in that manner that the trainers of his youth deserve punishment for having only partly fulfilled their duty.

The dancing pairs stood, as far as it could be accomplished, quite safe in the background, and the older ladies and gentlemen quietly returned thanks to God, that it was Mr. Mortimer's house, and not theirs, in which this scene was played.

"Mr. Mortimer," Clary began anew, "please come this way."

The banker so far overcame his timidity that he put his eyeglass closer to his eye in order to look more exactly at the horses and their riders; and as soon as he recognized Clary he came forth resolutely. Oh, one is not a banker for nothing, and one knows what wealth amounting to a million pounds sterling really signifies!

Mr. Mortimer forgot that two horses were in his ball-

room destroying his carpets; he forgot that hundreds of eyes were turned expectantly toward him, and, waiting for the moment when he would show the bold intruders to the door. He made a low bow to Clary and inquired almost submissively:

"I am at your service, Miss Ellis."

"I have to speak to you, Mr. Mortimer; the affair cannot be put off."

"I am ready for you," and pointing to the left, he continued: "Pray will you kindly accompany me to my office?"

"With pleasure, but I should first like to leave the saddle."

Ready to serve, the banker assisted the ladies to descend from their horses and walked in front of them to the office. The governess found the whole affair very amusing, and when Clary whispered to her to order John to take the horses in the yard, she nodded quite pleased; it was almost more interesting than a romance.

In the meantime Mr. Mortimer's partner had risen from the whist-table, and wishing to be of some assistance, he saw that the horses in the stable were properly cared for, and then waited patiently to be called by his partner.

This, however, did not immediately take place. Mr. Mortimer sat with his beautiful customer, for as such he considered Clary, whose bills he honored, and when she attempted some excuses for her "peculiar" intrusion, he replied smilingly:

"If anybody is possessed of wealth such as Mademoiselle Clary can boast of, every eccentricity is excusable."

"I am exceedingly obliged," said Clary laughing. "I

should nevertheless not have chosen this course except through necessity. But in order to return to our business, I have to inform you of my demands."

"No doubt: in the first instance, money! How much do you stand in need of?"

"Am I at liberty to draw upon you for the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, Mr. Mortimer?"

"Pooh! a mere bagatelle; to-morrow morning it is at your disposal."

"To-morrow morning? No, Mr. Mortimer, I am in want of it at once."

"At once, mademoiselle? Impossible! The bank is closed."

"Then order it to be opened."

"But this is against the rules of our establishment!"

"You will have to deviate from this rule on my account, unless you prefer to decline altogether to do business with me. Mr. Bradwood will, no doubt, be ready to take your place!"

Bradwood, the rival, the *bete noire* of the banking-house of Mortimer & Co.

Mr. Mortimer's hair stood on end. No, that can and dare not be. Should he erase from his books the name of Lord Ellis of Crainburton? It would be a crime to think of such a thing! The transaction was certainly opposed to all rule and law; it was eleven o'clock in the evening, and at a time of the celebration of a festival, but what was to be done? Mr. Mortimer wrote a line, rang the bell, and when the servant entered gave him the note to deliver to Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Edwards was the bridegroom, and if he said yes, then the banker would also say the same.

"Your wish will be complied with, mademoiselle," said he, obligingly. "Have you, perhaps, any further requests to make?"

"Not very many—only mere bagatelles. I depart to-morrow morning for Algiers," said Clary, with indifference, as if speaking about taking a walk somewhere.

"For Algiers? H'm! the country is not bad, but the Frenchmen do not know much of colonization."

Madame Caraman opened her eyes very wide; she began to understand.

"I depart to-morrow morning early!" Clary coolly repeated.

Mortimer put his finger thoughtfully across his forehead.

"At daybreak, mademoiselle? Are you sure of it that to-morrow morning a vessel sails for that port? I am well acquainted with the departures of the various steamers—"

"And you know, therefore, that none of them sails for Algiers," interrupted Clary, laughing.

"Well, then?" asked the banker in an animated manner.

"Well, then, just on that account I have been looking for you."

"Looking for me?"

"Yes, indeed, you know all ship-brokers, and you will easily be able to help me out of my difficulties."

"But I do not exactly understand."

"Dear me, I am not speaking in the Coptic dialect!" exclaimed Clary, laughing. "I intend sailing to-morrow morning for Algiers. I have no vessel, and for that reason you will have to get me one."

"What? You desire a vessel—"

"Yes, yes. I am in want of a ship with captain, mate, sailors and boys—in short, with everything necessary for such an undertaking. To-morrow morning the ship, with steam up, must be ready for sailing, at the wharf of Marseilles. And now, please consider the matter; I am willing to allow you five minutes to do so."

The banker thought he was dreaming. Was it possible for anybody to demand of him, of the firm of Mortimer & Co., a complete, well-equipped steamer as if he could shake it out of his sleeve?

"Three minutes have already passed," reminded Clary, threatening with her finger.

Mortimer was scratching his forehead almost despairingly. It was close upon midnight, all offices closed. Where could he procure a vessel?

"The five minutes have passed," said Clary, coolly, rising to her feet.

Madame Caraman breathed more easily when she took hold of the door-handle; now the nonsensical plan was defeated.

"Pray do not trouble your cashier any further," remarked Clary, standing on the threshold. "I shall find somewhere else what I am in need of."

"But, mademoiselle," groaned Mortimer, before whose eyes Bradwood's figure appeared like a spectre, "you are demanding impossibilities of me."

"Mr. Mortimer," said Clary, with indifference, "two hundred years ago one of my ancestors pointed to the city of Edinburgh and said to his captain:

" 'In two hours I desire to dine at the bishop's palace in Edinburgh!'

"The city was fortified, and from the walls the cannons spread their deadly fire; but the captain did not say it was impossible, but he inquired:

" 'What does your lordship desire to have for dinner?'

"Two hours later my ancestor dined in the bishop's palace; the captain, of course, lost his life in the combat. Come, Madame Caraman."

"With pleasure," replied the governess, and both ladies left the office.

"Mademoiselle," sounded despairingly behind them.

"Well?" asked Clary, stopping.

"I do not promise for certain," stammered Mortimer, "but I believe—"

"Vessel, captain, mate, and sailors."

"Yes, dear me, yes," groaned Mortimer, dropping exhausted into a chair.

"And to-morrow at daybreak—"

"It will, no doubt, be possible to comply with your request."

"Especially be careful in selecting a captain; and the broker will have to sell me the ship."

"This transaction also will be carried out."

"Well, then, please arrange everything; my time is very limited."

Madame Caraman gazed despairingly at the banker; he was really ready to lend his hand to such a stupid affair?

"No, I do not give my permission," she at length resolutely declared. "I have obligations toward Lord Ellis, and I object to it."

Clary took the governess's head, kissed her heartily, and whispered to her:

"Be persuaded, Mamma Caraman. I desire it, and therefore we depart."

Submitting to Providence, she bent her head down; she was consoled.

"Do not lose time, Mr. Mortimer," she then said, respectfully, "it has to be."

Now a slender-built man, with rosy cheeks and red beard, entered the office; it was the bridegroom.

"Here is the amount required," said he, handing the banker a packet of bank-notes.

"Are the bank-notes legal tender in Algiers?" asked Clary.

Father-in-law and son-in-law looked upon her pitifully; they were Bank of England notes, which even a Greenlander would expect to have cashed on sight.

"Edwards," said the banker, vivaciously, "is Wharton in the ball-room?"

"Yes, father."

"Tell him to come here directly."

"Who is Wharton?" asked Clary.

"The only man I can trust to leave a ball at midnight to get a ship ready for sailing. It will be a dear affair though."

Clary laughed.

"Mr. Mortimer, am I rich enough to pay this Wharton?"

"Oh, with your fortune you could buy a thousand Whartons."

"And he will do all I ask of him?"

"Yes."

"Good! Wharton is my man. One thing more, Mr. Mortimer. You have the confidence of my family. I

will give you a power of attorney to do with my fortune what you wish in case—"

"In case?"

"I do not return from Algeria."

"Oh, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Mortimer, with emotion. "Are you going to run such dangers?"

"I do not say that, but business is business, and I always like to have things in order."

"Here is Mr. Wharton," said the son-in-law.

The person who entered was a man of herculean stature. His thick head was covered with bushy red hair.

Clary looked curiously at the giant.

"Are you an Englishman, Mr. Wharton?" she asked.

"No, an American from Baltimore, miss, and your humble servant."

"Mademoiselle," interrupted Mortimer, "will you please explain to Mr. Wharton the nature of the business?"

"Willingly. Will you take a seat, please?"

"Thank you," replied the Yankee, "I prefer to stand."

"Mr. Wharton, you have a ship at anchor at Marseilles?"

"A ship, no, a pearl—the Crocodile—which is famous all over the world for its stanchness and rapidity."

"You own it?"

"Yes."

"How much did it cost you, Mr. Wharton?"

"How much did it cost me? That is a peculiar question," muttered the American.

"Captain," said Clary, rising, "I am rich, very rich. I am going to make you a proposition, and hope you

will accept it. What price do you ask for the Crocodile?"

"But the Crocodile is not for sale. I would rather die than give up my ship."

The captain paced up and down the room with giant strides and struck his forehead with his fist. The proposition, together with the liquors he had drunk, excited him.

"Let us say 100,000 francs," said Clary.

The captain continued to strike his forehead.

"One hundred and twenty thousand francs."

The strokes became weaker.

"A good business," said Mortimer.

"And you shall not be separated from your beloved Crocodile," said Clary, laughingly; "for as soon as I become the owner of the vessel, I shall make you its captain."

"I'll accept the offer."

"Good; Mr. Mortimer will pay you the money."

"Willingly," said the banker, "as soon as everything is arranged."

"That shall be done at once," exclaimed the giant, gleefully; "and, miss, give me your hand to bind the bargain."

The young girl became frightened; if the giant were to grasp her slender fingers he might crush them, and yet she knew that the shake of the hand was the usual mode sailors chose to bind a bargain. Hesitatingly she held forth her hand, but Wharton, who guessed her anxiety, laid his fist in hers in as gentle a manner as possible. The girl laughed and said:

"Captain, have steam up at once!"

"Yes, miss; but the ball?"

"The ball is a secondary matter. You are my captain, and, naturally—"

"You are right. I didn't care for the ball, anyhow. It was only the fine brandy I thought of."

"I will tell Mr. Mortimer to let you have a few bottles. Captain, when does the sun rise to-morrow?"

"At 6.18 A.M."

"Good; at 6.19 you can depart."

"You will be satisfied with me. You have got a good captain, a boatswain and eight sailors. I am the smallest of the lot. Where are we going to, anyway?"

"To Algiers, captain. There is one thing more I wish to say."

"Speak, commodore."

"Have you noticed a yacht in the harbor? the flag is a gold mountain on a red field."

"Yes, the little peanut-shell," he said, disdainfully, "which is called the Ice Bird."

"Yes, the Ice Bird. This peanut-shell, as you call it, starts to-morrow morning for Algeria. Whether it intends to stop at Bona or Algiers I do not know. You would do well to find out."

"I will do so," said Wharton.

"Then good-by, and remember to-morrow."

When the ladies rode home the governess sighed.

"Oh, miss, what will Lord Ellis say?"

"That my brother has now a chance to come into the inheritance," laughed Miss Clary.

CHAPTER XLV

MALDAR

HAYDEE and Mercedes were seated in a magnificently furnished boudoir, engaged in a lively conversation. Spero's dark head lay in his mother's lap. They were both talking of their beloved ones. Mercedes said, that if Albert died her life would be at an end. Haydee only thought of Spero.

Spero, too, thought about the seriousness of his position, and was in this, as in other things, far in advance of his age. He felt deep despair at the idea of a separation from his mother, but the halo which surrounded his father gave the boy courage.

Six o'clock had now struck. Haydee's arm clung tighter to Spero, and a tear fell upon the youth's dark locks.

Monte-Cristo softly opened the door and entered. His face looked pale and careworn. Spero ran to meet his father. The count took him in his arms and softly asked:

"Are you ready, my son?"

"Yes, father," replied Spero, simply; "where you go, I follow."

Haydee hurriedly dried her tears as Monte-Cristo drew nearer. She clung to his bosom, and whispered:

"Am I to lose you both? If I only knew when you were going to return."

The count turned to Mercedes.

"Mercedes," he said to Albert's mother, "you see I do not shrink from any sacrifice when it is a question of duty. Love my Haydee and console her. She needs it."

"I swear it," replied Mercedes, solemnly; and, clasping Haydee in her arms, she added: "There is still time, Haydee; tell me, 'My husband and my child should stay here,' and I shall acquiesce in it."

"You hear her words, Haydee," said Monte-Cristo, casting an anxious look at Ali Tebelen's daughter. "What is your answer?"

Haydee's beautiful face was illuminated with a halo as she took Spero's arm and led him to his father.

"Be worthy of him," she whispered, with emotion.

Mercedes sank sobbing at the young wife's feet, and exclaimed:

"Now I shall get my son back again; I feel it."

The count finished all his preparations and chose the best weapons. He went with Spero to the dock the next morning, and was met by Jacopo, who looked like a different person.

"Have you inspected everything?" asked Monte-Cristo of the Corsican "And are you satisfied?"

"Yes, master."

"How many men have you?"

"Ten, sir; they are all trustworthy and have travelled in Africa before. I can answer for them."

"Good. Ah! there you are, Coucou," said the count, turning to the Zouave. "I am glad that you are punctual."

The count inspected the yacht and expressed his delight to Jacopo.

The Crocodile was also lying, ready to sail, in the harbor. Wharton, confident of overtaking the Ice Bird, paced up and down the deck, rubbing his hands and from time to time casting contemptuous glances at the yacht.

From all the towers of Marseilles the seventh morning hour was rung. The count gave the signal for the departure, and the Ice Bird glided gracefully through the waters.

Monte-Cristo stood on deck looking back at France, where a part of his heart was left behind.

He had been talking with Spero for over an hour about their future plans, when a sudden commotion was heard, and the count, who was a strict disciplinarian, looked angrily about. Before he had time to inquire about the cause of the noise, a heavy mass came rolling down the cabin stairs. The count opened the door and saw the Zouave and another strange looking person, lying like a ball of cord on the floor. They both rose, but the Zouave would not let go of the other's throat at any price. The stranger was dressed in rags, and his thin, haggard face and glaring eyes made a disagreeable impression.

"What is the meaning of this, Coucou?" asked the count, angrily.

"Captain," the Zouave breathlessly replied, "I know I did wrong, but I could not help it. Just look at the face of this fellow."

Monte-Cristo looked searchingly at the man.

"Where did you pick him up?" he asked of the Zouave.

"In the engine room, close to the boiler. His brain must be half roasted already."

A cloud passed over the count's face.

"Who are you?" he said, turning to the stranger.

The man remained motionless. It was plain he did not understand the question.

The count now saw that the man was an Arabian, and repeated the question in that tongue.

"I am a poor man," the stranger submissively replied.

"How did you get to the ship?"

The Arabian was silent.

Monte-Cristo looked at the man again, and soon comprehended that the man was a hypocrite and an impostor.

Either the man was poor and had no money to go back to his home or else he was a spy.

"You were in France?" the count suddenly said to the Arabian; "how did you get there?"

"In one of the ships of your nation."

"How long ago is that?"

"Woe to him who counts the days and hours."

"Why did you not come to me? Were you afraid I would refuse to take you on board?"

"Was I to beg?" asked the Arabian, disdainfully.

"What would you do if I were to put you adrift in a bark?"

"Allah is great!"

Coucou understood enough of Arabian to comprehend the pride which lay in the stranger's words. He would

have given anything to have been able to carry out the count's threats; he advanced a step, but Monte-Cristo saw his intention and motioned him back.

"Man," he said to the Arab, "you did wrong to put yourself in my power. Nevertheless, I shall be hospitable to you. Go!"

Turning to Coucou, he said:

"This man is my guest, and as such he must be sacred to you."

The Arab bowed, put his hand to his forehead, and turned toward the stairs.

"One question more," said the count; "what is your name?"

"I am called Maldar."

"You said you were poor, and yet your name signifies riches."

"He whom Allah protects is rich," replied the Arab, in veiled tones.

CHAPTER XLVI

MISS CLARY'S SECRET

FOR any one else but Miss Clary Ellis, it would be no small matter to make such a journey; but she knew no fear, and in spite of the frail expression of her face, there was no hindrance she could not overcome when she wished to carry out a project. Her governess murmured when she ordered her to get everything ready. According to her it was madness to go to a "monkey-land," as she termed Africa. But Miss Clary paid no attention to her, but went right on packing her trunks, and at four o'clock she was all ready.

She now called for John. This paragon of a servant would rather have cut off his tongue and hands than ask a question.

"John," said Clary, "have the horses harnessed."

"Yes, my lady."

"See that these trunks are carried down to the carriage."

"Yes, my lady."

"We shall leave Marseilles."

"Yes, my lady."

"We go to Algeria; if you have any preparations to make, do so."

"Yes, my lady."

Had John been told that they were tc start on a voyage to the moon, he would have answered in his stereotyped way: "Yes, my lady."

Five minutes later the carriage was at the door.

"It is serious, then," sighed the governess. "We are going to Algeria, then. Do you know, Clary, I have been weak to give in so?"

Clary did not reply, and Madame Caraman, encouraged by her silence, continued:

"Suppose an accident should happen to you, I would not survive the blow, for I love you. Wait another day, and if you still persist in your determination, I am satisfied."

When the governess had ended, Clary offered her her hand, and mockingly said:

"If you do not survive the shock of my death, you will not have to answer for it."

"No, no; prove to me that I am wrong."

"God forbid! You are right; but nevertheless—"

"Stick to your plan, then; but suppose I do not accompany you?"

"It would cause me great grief, but could not alter my resolution. I am young, Madame Caraman, very rich, and wish to enjoy life for once—no one loves me—"

"Ah, Clary, you have a heart of gold," sobbed Madame Caraman.

"Accompany me to Algeria, Madame Caraman; I need your consolation and comforting care. I go there to perform a good action."

Madame Caraman looked keenly at Clary. The latter blushed, and continued:

"Mercedes deplores the loss of her son, and I desire to restore him to her if it is possible. Think what joy will be mine if Albert flies to the arms of his mother and I can proudly say: 'This is my work.'"

The governess pondered deeply, and Clary, who was deceived by her silence, impetuously exclaimed:

"Mamma Caraman, answer me. Have I not expressed myself clearly? I have never been of service to any one. Yet, while there are people who offer up their lives and their energies to help others, is it a sin for me to desire to do likewise?"

"You mean, by that, the Count of Monte-Cristo?" replied Madame Caraman, thoughtfully.

Clary blushed.

"Yes," she said, softly. "The count is my model."

"And you wish to follow this 'model' to Africa?"

"There is a good deed to be done there, and I, who have nothing to lose, shall follow him."

Madame Caraman looked smilingly at her.

"I see," she said, simply, "there is nothing to be done but to let you have your way."

Clary had expected more resistance. She burst into tears, and threw her arms around Madame Caraman's neck, and the governess tenderly kissed the young girl.

John now opened the door, and told them the carriage was ready.

"Forward!" exclaimed Madame Caraman, cheerfully, "and let us pray to God that we return again in good health."

On the way to the harbor, Clary wept silently. Madame Caraman wisely kept her thoughts to herself.

"I was once young myself," she muttered to herself, "and I know how it looks in an eighteen-year-old girl's heart. Yes, if I were twenty years younger, I don't know but that I would fall in love with this Count of Monte-Cristo myself."

Had Madame Caraman discovered Clary's secret?

CHAPTER XLVII

AN AMERICAN WAGER

JACK WHARTON was not one of those men who mean something else than what they say. His whole vocabulary was either "Yes" or "No," just as the circumstances were. When Clary arrived at the harbor at seven o'clock, she found a troop of giants awaiting her, who stood in line like Prussian grenadiers. Wharton moved his hat, and said:

"You see, my lady, we are punctual."

"I did not expect anything else," Clary simply replied, "and please see that my luggage is carefully brought on board—and nothing broken," she added, as she cast a glance at the broad forms of the sailors.

Wharton promised to carry out her orders faithfully.

"Have you never had any adventures, captain?" she asked. "I should like to know something about your wife."

"Mrs. Wharton is a pearl—she was a widow when I married her—"

"Ah!"

"Yes," continued Wharton, indifferently; "I ate up her first husband; he was a splendid fellow."

Saying which he opened the carriage door and assisted the ladies on board the boat. Clary, as she stood on deck, noticed a gold-colored flag flying from a staff.

"What does the color of that flag mean?" she asked.

"Ah, my lady, as our commodore has gold blond hair, I permitted myself to hoist up flags of the same color."

"Well, I must say," said Madame Caraman, "that beats Sir Walter Raleigh's gallantry; you know he placed his gold-embroidered mantle in the mud for Queen Elizabeth to walk upon."

At this moment a tall, lean figure as graceful as a mast loomed up on deck.

"Mrs. Wharton," said the captain, proudly.

Clary and her governess shuddered as they looked at Mrs. Wharton.

The copper-colored face of the woman looked like the broken hilt of a knife; her coal-black hair gleaming with oil was tied in a knot at the back of her head; the large mouth did not hide the still larger yellow teeth and the flat nose was bored with holes. Her ears were decorated with three gold rings apiece. Her dress consisted of a dark red skirt, fastened at the waist by a gold cord. Her decollete waist allowed the brown skin to be perceived, and her flat feet were inclosed in moccasins. Yet, in spite of Minnie Wharton's repulsive appearance, her husband loved her.

As soon as Mrs. Wharton saw the two ladies she invited them, in a voice which sounded like the croak of a raven, to her cabin. They were both astonished when they entered it to find it a beautifully furnished boudoir,

whose silk hangings and bric-a-brac made it look more like a parlor of the Faubourg St. Germain than a ship's cabin.

"The ladies will excuse me," said Minnie, "but the time was short and I could do no better."

"You do not mean," exclaimed Clary, surprised, "that you did everything during the night?"

"The captain did not get back until midnight, and I hurriedly purchased the things in the stores of Marseilles."

Clary thought it was a tale out of the "Arabian Nights."

Wharton had thought it a question of honor to show the young lady that she had not paid too dearly for the Crocodile, and had he been able to take down the moon, he would have hung it as a night-lamp in her cabin. The captain and his wife had scoured the shops of Marseilles at one in the morning and bought all the things, paying dearly for them. The room of Madame Caraman was also a model of neatness. Next to the bed stood a small table, upon which was a silver service with a bottle of brandy on it. Madame Caraman was delighted, and when her sense of smell detected the fine quality of the brandy, she was almost moved to tears.

A head appeared in the doorway, and the captain said:

"My lady, the Ice Bird left ten minutes ago, and five minutes later the Crocodile lifted anchor."

"Good, captain. You are sure of being able to overtake the Ice Bird?"

"Leave that to me, my lady."

The captain now thought that the time for dining

had come, and invited the ladies into a charming little room.

"Captain, you are a magician," exclaimed the young girl, laughing. "Such a beautiful dining-room, and flowers too," she added, as she perceived a huge bank of flowers.

"Oh, what lovely flowers," she exclaimed delightedly.

"Mrs. Wharton is the magician, my lady," replied the captain; "and now please be seated."

"Directly," replied Clary laughing; "but first permit me to beg your wife and yourself to join us."

Two more covers were placed on the table.

The breakfast was a substantial English meal, and consisted of tea, coffee, eggs and ham. They were all tasty dishes. The conversation was very lively until Mrs. Wharton arose and begged to be excused as she had other duties to perform.

"Ah, my Minnie is a pearl," murmured Wharton, looking tenderly back at her.

"You seem to be much attached to each other," said Clary, cordially.

"Oh, my lady, how could it be otherwise? We have not been separated from each other since twenty years; we have common remembrances which we can never forget."

"If I am not mistaken, you said before that Mrs. Wharton was a widow?"

"Yes, the widow of a Sioux."

"And did she belong to the same tribe?"

"Yes, my lady, but she is long since a Christian."

"And who was her husband?"

"A Sioux, poor Tu-Sam-Ba."

"And how did he die, you say?"

"I ate him up, my lady."

"Ah, really?"

"Yes," said Wharton, sorrowfully; "his wife and I ate him up, and through this circumstance Minnie became a widow."

Natural as it seemed to the captain, Madame Caraman gazed in open horror, and as soon as she could recover the use of her tongue, she asked for explanations.

The captain was not loth to tell his story, and just as he was settling himself comfortably in a chair, Clary exclaimed:

"Before you begin, captain, take a look at the yacht."

"I shall," said Wharton, "but you can rest easy and trust in the Crocodile."

The captain disappeared, and Madame Caraman, turning to Clary, said:

"We have come among strange people."

"We had no other choice, and we might have fared worse."

"Well, I'm much obliged for the consolation—cannibals!"

Clary was silent. What could she have answered?

In about ten minutes the captain returned out of breath.

"Think of it," he said; "these stupid firemen have not put on enough steam, and when I came on deck—"

"The Ice Bird was far away," interrupted Clary.

"I cannot deny it, but it will be all right."

"And your promise?"

"Ah, my lady, I would like to make you a wager."

"A wager?"

"Yes, that when we arrive at Bona, the Ice Bird will not be visible."

"Good."

"And now let me continue with the story of my marriage—"

"Oh, yes; I should like to know more about your wedding supper," said Madame Caraman.

The captain lighted a cigar and began:

"In the first place, ladies, you must know that I have not always been rich. I have not got a million yet, but I am in comfortable circumstances, so to speak. Twenty-five years ago I had not a dollar in the world. I did everything, but could not succeed in anything. In November, 1825, I was absolutely penniless, and one of my comrades, Dick Merton, who was as badly off as myself, made a proposition to me to go to California. At that time California was still hardly explored.

" 'I will go along,' I said, in answer to Dick's proposition.

" 'You know the peril, Jack,' he replied. 'You might be in danger of being captured by the Indians and eaten up.'

"At any other time, and under different circumstances, I might have hesitated, but my position was a desperate one, and I accepted. The next day, armed to the teeth, we started. We were eight when we started. When we reached San Francisco only five of us were left. One was killed by the bite of a snake, and the rest fell down the precipices of the Rocky Mountains. At that time none of the comforts and luxuries to be found there to-day existed. We worked with pick and axe, and stilled our

hunger with the wild animals we killed. Two weeks later trouble arose in the camp. Some of our party maintained that we had chosen a bad place, because the gold did not pan out as well as they had hoped. Others again persisted in upholding the spot selected. The upshot of the matter was, that we parted. I and two others remained, the rest departing in a westerly direction.

"We built a block-house. It was situated under the shadow of a gigantic cedar-tree and protected us from the wind and rain. All went along swimmingly until one day I heard a yell of joy from Dick. I ran toward him, and to my surprise I saw a vein of gold, which, at a superficial calculation, must be worth a million dollars. We danced about for joy. Very soon Osborne, our third companion, came. We returned to our hut, and after drinking a large quantity of whiskey in honor of the event, we went to bed. As usual, we were fully dressed with our weapons in our hands ready for any emergency. How long I slept I do not know, but I was suddenly awakened by a loud yell, which still rings in my ears. Starting up, I looked around and beheld Osborne staring with wide-open mouth at something which lay in a corner.

" 'What is the matter?' I asked.

"Osborne did not reply, but pointed to a corner near the door. I looked in the direction indicated, and by the dim light of the lamp saw to my horror—a rattlesnake. I looked around for Dick; he was leaning against the wall, his face ghastly pale. Before I was aware of it Dick had kicked in the strong door. Osborne must have had the same idea for he too rushed for the door. They both reached the threshold at the same time.

"The door was too narrow to allow them both to pass; Dick seized Osborne by the throat; a struggle ensued, and the next minute Osborne sank to the ground with Dick's bowie-knife plunged up to the hilt in his breast. The snake, aroused by the noise, sprang up and struck Dick a deadly blow.

"In a moment he was in convulsions."

Wharton paused. The perspiration stood on his forehead and the muscles of his lips twitched. Clary buried her face in her hands, and Madame Caraman prevented herself from fainting by taking a glass of brandy.

"I beg your pardon, ladies," the captain proceeded, "but the memory of that awful time overcame me. I am no coward, but the terrible sight unmanned me. The rattlesnake looked at me with its hideous eyes. The fear of death nerved me, and seizing my gun I discharged it full at the monster and then lost consciousness. When I recovered next morning and saw the dead bodies of Dick and Osborne I broke into tears."

"Captain," interrupted Clary, "your tale is so interesting that one is apt to forget, but—"

"But what?" asked Wharton expectantly.

"I am anxious to know how many knots the Crocodile is making."

"Ah! I was not thinking of that. I am sure of my ship."

"So much the better; let us go on deck."

"And my story?"

"Can be continued later on; I am to know yet how the Indian's widow became your wife."

Wharton preceded the ladies to the deck. He knew

his ship and had no fears. The weather was magnificent and the vessel's sails were swelled by the breeze. Clary looked in every direction to catch a glimpse of the Ice Bird, but could not see it.

"Captain, where is the Ice Bird?" she said, turning to Wharton.

"The Ice Bird? It's far behind. How could it compare in speed with the Crocodile?"

"Are you sure of it?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Please ask one of the sailors!"

Wharton did so, and was astonished when he was told that the "peanut-shell," as he called the Ice Bird, made twenty-three knots an hour, whereas the Crocodile made only twelve. The long face he made at this announcement caused Clary to burst into a loud laugh.

"You see it is folly to attempt to overtake the Count of Monte-Cristo," said Madame Caraman to Clary; "if you follow my advice, return to Marseilles, where we can wait for news of the Ice Bird and—"

"Go back?" interrupted Clary. "Never!"

"But Monte-Cristo will arrive before us, and two hours after his arrival at Bona he will be on his way to the desert, and you do not intend to follow him there among the lions, tigers and jackals, do you?"

"Mamma Caraman, if you are afraid, you can go back to France," said Clary, gently.

Captain Wharton now came back.

"Well," said Clary to him, "what's to be done?"

"We will overtake the Ice Bird, and all of us will be at your service and not leave you until you discharge us yourself. Will that do?"

"Captain," said Clary, "I am afraid you are promising too much again."

"Oh, no; this time I am confident of success."

"But can you answer for your men?"

Wharton blew a whistle. All the crew appeared.

"Men," he said, turning to the sailors, "are you going to stand by me and follow me wherever the ship goes?"

"Yes!" they cried in chorus.

"Are you satisfied, my lady?" asked the captain, triumphantly.

"Yes."

"Where are we to go?" asked the captain.

"To the interior of Africa, in fact in the neighborhood of the Sahara."

"Good, commodore," replied the captain.

"The captain," she said, turning to the men, "shall pay you whatever you demand. All I ask of you is devotion."

"We swear it!" shouted the sailors, enthusiastically swinging their caps.

Mrs. Wharton approached the young lady and said:

"Have you forgiven the captain, miss?"

"Long since, Mrs. Wharton," replied Clary, grasping her hand.

Clary and Madame Caraman withdrew to their boudoir.

"Don't you think it rather dangerous to be in the society of these people?" asked Madame Caraman.

"Have no fear, Mamma Caraman; I answer for everything."

"One question more, dear child. What was the cause of your apparent indifference to-day, when you heard that the Ice Bird had distanced the Crocodile?"

Clary blushed deeply, and throwing her arms about Madame Caraman's neck, whispered:

"I confess it did not surprise me. I did not wish to wound Monte-Cristo by overtaking him."

"Monte-Cristo," murmured Madame Caraman; "ah, my darling, take care."

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE WEDDING BREAKFAST

THE Crocodile sped swiftly along that day. Clary, who had become tired, went to sleep, while the governess sat in a chair near the bed and dreamed.

The night passed, and the next morning Clary asked the captain whether they were in sight of land.

"Yes," replied the captain.

"And how long will it be before we enter the harbor?"

"About two hours."

"Good. Let me make you a proposition. We can dine now, and you can tell us the conclusion of your story."

An hour later dinner was concluded, and the captain continued his narrative.

"At the moment I put foot on the threshold of the cabin I heard a peculiar noise, and at the same moment an arrow flew past my head and lodged itself in the door. Where had the arrow come from? What to do I knew not. Suddenly an inspiration came to me. The cabin was pretty solidly built, and the roof was constructed of thick canewood. Around the four sides were thick

planks, which offered me shelter in case of an attack. That my enemies were Indians I felt sure. I locked the door, barricaded it from the inside, and felt sorry that the rattlesnake was dead, for it would have been a splendid weapon against the Indians. Going up to the roof, and lying flat on my stomach, I peered out. I shuddered when I saw my enemies. They were Indians of the worst kind. With the Sioux and Chippewas we had kept up friendly relations, but these were Arikaras, our bitterest foes. This tribe were deadly enemies of the whites, and the refined cruelty with which they tortured their prisoners made them feared by all. They were all armed with muskets, and numbered about fifty warriors. At the rear of the group I saw two Sioux. One was a man and the other a woman. The man was Tu-Sam-Ba; the woman, his wife, the 'Prairie Flower,' the present Mrs. Wharton. They seemed to be prisoners, and when I thought of the custom of the Arikaras to roast their prisoners alive, a thrill of horror ran through my veins. The attitude of the 'Prairie Flower' was so noble that she immediately won my heart. 'Either you or no one,' I thought, and firmly resolved to attempt the rescue of my angel.''

The ''angel'' tried in vain to allay her husband's excitement. Madame Caraman could hardly restrain her laughter whenever she looked at the angel. Clary, on the other hand, preserved her gravity, and calmly said:

''I appreciate your feelings, captain; continue.''

Wharton bowed profoundly and proceeded.

''The Arikaras surrounded the cabin, while I lay motionless, with my hand on the trigger of my gun.

The savages now began to break in the door and soon effected an entrance. Immediately I heard a loud noise. They had discovered the two dead bodies and the rattlesnake. They thought the two whites had killed the rattlesnake, which is regarded as a sacred animal by them, and that Manitou, their god, had struck them dead. A place which Manitou visits is sacred to them, and I thought that they would leave the hut. An ugly Indian, who seemed to be the chief, commanded silence and delivered a long speech to his subjects. At its conclusion the Indians moved about and began to gather brushwood. They piled it in heaps on the floor of the cabin and the chief set fire to it. Presently the smell of burning flesh reached me. They were burning Dick and Osborne's bodies. At the same moment a bright flame licked the roof, my gun exploded in consequence of the heat, and, half dead with fright, I fell into the middle of the group. My fate was settled now. They surrounded me, bound me with cords, and with wild yells they rushed out bearing me along. I—"

"Captain," interrupted Clary, "don't you think we have reached Bona yet?"

"No," replied Wharton, vivaciously, "not before the next two hours."

Clary laughed loudly, and the captain saw that he had committed a blunder.

"I fainted," continued the captain, "and when I came to my senses it was pitch dark and I lay on the ground, bound hand and foot. By the flickering light of a camp-fire I saw the Arikaras sitting around and calmly smoking their pipes. Tu-Sam-Ba was tied to a post, while the Prairie Flower crouched at his feet. I determined to

speak to the Indians, and gathering courage, I exclaimed in the English language:

"'Comrades, do you intend to let me starve? Have I done you any wrong?'

"'You are an enemy of our race. You killed the sacred serpent.'

"'Should I have waited then until it had killed me?'

"'You have killed,' exclaimed one redskin, 'and you will be killed in your turn.'

"The chief now claimed my scalp. It was awarded to him. While the redskins were carrying on a war-dance, I again lost consciousness. I did not awake until I felt a hand pressed lightly on my forehead. It was the 'Prairie Flower.'

"'Tu-Sam-Ba is dead,' she softly whispered; 'he was roasted. Arikaras surprised—escaped!'

"She raised me from the ground, and, carrying me in her arms as if I had been a child, she brought me to a glade in the forest.

"'I am hungry,' I said, pointing to my mouth.

"The woman looked at me for a moment in despair, and shrugged her shoulders to indicate to me that there was no hotel in the neighborhood."

At this point of the story Mrs. Wharton disappeared, and Madame Caraman took advantage of her absence to ask a question.

"Has Minnie changed much since that time?"

"Oh, yes," replied the captain, his face lighting up with pleasure, "she has grown much handsomer."

This was too much for Madame Caraman's composure, and, coughing loudly, she pressed a handkerchief to her lips and vanished through the door.

The captain looked wonderingly after her, and, turning to Clary, said:

"My lady, I had much rather be alone with you! Not every one is able to appreciate the sacrifice Mrs. Wharton made for me."

"Please continue your story."

"Suddenly," said Wharton, taking up the thread of his story, "the squaw vanished, but returned soon after with a package carefully enveloped in leaves. She removed the leaves, and, with a light sob, handed me several pieces of roasted meat.

"I took them eagerly and ate ravenously of the food, which was very tasty. Seeing her melancholy looks, I asked her to partake of some. She shook her head.

" 'I am not hungry,' she softly murmured.

" 'Then I shall not eat any more,' I declared.

"Seeing me determined, she hesitated no longer, and joined me in the meal. When we had finished, I asked her where she had procured the meat, and, with bowed head, she replied:

" 'Tu-Sam-Ba roasted—Arikaras disturbed—did not eat—Tu-Sam-Ba, Sioux—my husband.'

"Good God! I had eaten her husband, and the Prairie Flower had not hesitated to serve him up roasted to me! My lady, is there anything in history equal to this!"

"No, I know of none," replied Clary, hurriedly.

"Ah, I knew it; I—"

"Captain," said a sailor, opening the door, "we are nearing the harbor of Bona."

Clary rose hastily; she felt as if a terrible burden had been lifted off her shoulders.

"Do you not approve of my marriage?" asked Whar-

ton, anxiously; "she is a Sioux, but has become a Christian?"

"Certainly, I can understand your case perfectly."

Wharton went away and Clary was left behind. She pondered deeply, whether she had done right in trusting herself to the care of these cannibals.

CHAPTER XLIX

MALDAR'S FAREWELL

THE Ice Bird flew like an arrow over the glistening waters, and in a few hours land was in sight. Monte-Cristo went on deck with his son, and was delighted at the latter's enthusiasm.

"Spero," he said, solemnly placing his hand on the boy's head, "in less than two hours you will set foot in a new world. Great dangers await you. Will you have the courage to brave them?"

"Oh, papa, when you are near me, I have no fear."

"Do not speak thus; circumstances may happen which may separate us. The desert is still unexplored, and the horrors of nature are not always the greatest dangers which threaten mankind."

"But why do you speak of such things, papa?" said Spero, terrified.

"Because I am not immortal. I may be conquered. Spero, look me in the eye, and swear to me that, should anything occur, you will not despair. You must never forget that you owe everything to your mother. Love her like one of those sainted women, for she deserves it."

"What do you fear, father?"

"Nothing. Rest easy, my son; I live and watch over you."

The next minute Monte-Cristo was giving his orders as usual to the sailors. Yet he was inwardly uneasy; a heavy load seemed to bear him down, and the air he breathed threatened to choke him.

And yet he was surrounded by faithful servants, who would willingly have given up their lives for him—Jacopo, Bertuccio, and Coucou. They were all ready to brave any danger, and the breast of each of them was a wall of protection about him.

The town rose before the gaze of the travellers. Monte-Cristo leaned against the prow, and gazed enthusiastically at the harbor where the Carthaginian barks had hidden Hannibal's plunder.

Suddenly Jacopo hurried on deck, and excitedly exclaimed:

"Master—come quickly—your cabin door is open."

"What of that?"

"The safe is open, too."

"Impossible!"

"Master, I saw with my own eyes the contents of the safe lying on the ground. Gold and diamonds are scattered about the floor."

Monte-Cristo frowned. Was there a thief on board?

"Come, Spero," he said, and, followed by Jacopo, father and son hurried to the cabin.

As the Corsican had said, the cabin was indeed open, and the carpet was strewn with emeralds, rubies, and other precious stones. Monte-Cristo at first examined the lock, the secret spring of which he alone knew how to open.

"It was not a thief who opened the safe," he said to Jacopo.

"But the jewels—"

"Just so. A thief would have taken them with him."

Jacopo was silent; the truth of this assertion was evident to him.

"Has any one besides you known about it?" asked Monte-Cristo, after a pause.

"No one, master; I called you directly."

"Good, Jacopo. Speak to no one about this matter."

"But, master; if we have a thief on board—"

Monte-Cristo frowned; he did not brook the least opposition.

"Go now, Jacopo, and keep quiet."

When Jacopo had gone, Monte-Cristo called Spero, and bade him examine the lock to see if he could discover anything.

Spero obeyed, but found nothing.

Monte-Cristo laughed.

"You are still young," he said. "Your eyes must first be taught how to see. There is a scratch on the lock which must have been made by a dagger."

"But, father, who could have tried to open the lock with a dagger?"

"A man, whose name I will tell you later on. With great skill he put the dagger in the lock and opened it. The cleverest locksmith could not have done better. Look!"

Monte-Cristo shoved the point of his own sword in the lock, and opened it easily.

"Really it is so," said Spero.

"And now let us look at the safe, which, I presume, was opened in the same way."

Spero looked carefully at the lock, and then said:

"It has not been opened with a dagger, I am sure of it."

"How do you know this?"

"I see it, papa; the man must have had a spiral spring."

"A spiral spring?"

"Yes; such as is used in pocket watches."

"You are right."

"And he did his work carelessly, for he left this little piece sticking in the lock." And with these words Spero triumphantly held up a small piece of steel.

Monte-Cristo clasped the boy in his arms. Spero was the worthy pupil of the man whose powers of observation had been sharpened during his intercourse with the Abbe Faria.

"And now you shall know who the man was that broke in here," said the count, pushing aside the diamonds which more than half filled the middle drawer of the safe. "Look here! what is this?"

"A dagger, father," said Spero, in affright.

"And on this dagger a piece of parchment is fastened."

Monte-Cristo carefully unrolled the scrap of paper and read the following, written with blood, in Arabian characters:

"Maldar to Monte-Cristo. The poor man who trusts in Allah is richer than the nobleman who fights against him. Beware of the Khouans!"

"Who are the Khouans, papa?"

"I shall tell you later on—there is no time to lose now. Come!"

Hurriedly going on deck with Spero, the count accosted Jacopo.

"When did the Arab leave the ship?" he asked.

"He is still here, master, in the custody of Coucou."

"Are you sure, Jacopo? Tell him to come to me."

Jacopo disappeared, but soon returned.

"Master," he said, "the Zouave is fast asleep."

"And the Arab?"

"Has disappeared."

"Really?"

"Yes, but we will find him. Come, now! Search every corner of the ship."

Monte-Cristo stopped the sailors.

"It is useless," he said, pointing to the shore, "look there!"

Maldar stood on the beach, shaking his fist angrily at the yacht.

"Comrades, listen," said Monte-Cristo, "the Arab is our deadly enemy. In Algeria every bush conceals a danger, every foot of ground carries an assassin! Do your duty, but look out for yourselves!"

The next minute the yacht reached the harbor—they were in Africa!

CHAPTER L

THE HOLY SIGNAL

AT THE southern end of the province of Oran, at the entrance to the Great Sahara, is the Salt Mountain, called by the Arabs Khenegel Melch. A solitary horseman rode slowly along the road. A white hood covered his head and a long gun was slung over his shoulder. Suddenly he halted and gazed around. On the left of him was the dark-red monolith called the Rock of Blood. Many murders had been committed at this place. On still nights faint groans are heard; they are like the cries of the spirits of the murdered ones, and the traveller who hears the sounds commends his soul to Allah and hurries away from the horrible spot. The solitary horseman threw back his hood from his face and lifted up his long thin arms in prayer. He sprang from his horse and examined the Rock of Blood carefully. On the stone near the base of the monolith was a star similar to those on his horse. The traveller prostrated himself on the ground, murmured a prayer and got on horseback again. The horse sped along like the wind, and was soon at the desert of the Great Sahara. Here all is light, not a shadow intercepts the rays of the sun, not a sound is heard here, all is

silent. The horseman rode on, his eye gazing at the sun's disk, which was gradually setting. He did not seem to mind the glare, and upon a closer examination of his person one would have found this natural. He was scarred all over and appeared to have undergone every bodily ill. His bernouse flew aside and from the open breast the handle of a yataghan peeped; no cord or belt held it. It was attached to the man's skin. The man was a martyr. Not a part of his body was whole. He was a mass of cuts and bruises. His brothers called him a saint. He spoke to Allah and Allah listened to his speech. The desert was his empire, and a smile broke over his lips when he found himself on his territory. How he kept in his way without a path to guide him was a mystery. The sun had disappeared from the horizon. The man now rose in the stirrups and, taking his gun, laid his finger on the trigger. He seemed to be expecting something. Was it an enemy from heaven? His gun was pointed in that direction. The moon now rose pale and clear. A loud report was heard. The saint greeted the moon, and said these words from the Koran in a loud, firm voice:

"The time will come for those who are to appear before Allah's throne."

"The time has come," answered another voice.

"Swear by the wise Koran that you are sent to show the right road," continued the saint.

"I swear it by the wise Koran," replied the same voice.

"Are you he whom I expect?"

"I am he whom Allah sent."

"Have you the sacred signal?"

"Look!" replied the stranger, throwing his bernouse aside and showing his lean, naked breast, and on his brown breast shone a star with six points.

The saint got off his horse, kissed the ground, and muttered half aloud:

"Allah is Allah, and Mahomet is his prophet."

"Rise," said the other; "the true believer only kneels to Allah."

"Are you not Allah's messenger? Have you not come to chastise the infidel oppressors of the holy island?"

"I am he, but yet I say rise. The brothers know that I am here. They knew I would appear in the fourth month, at the hour when the moon rose before the setting sun had disappeared from the horizon. The brothers, then, have sent you?"

"Yes."

"Are they ready to obey the messenger of Allah? Are they ready to sacrifice their own and their wives' lives?"

"Look at me! I have torn my limbs with pincers. The brothers have done likewise. We are ready to obey."

"Then I say to you, Maldar Mohammed ben Abdallah, the hour for revenge has come. Death to the Giaours!"

He paused for a moment; then continued:

"Where are the Khouans?"

"At Uargla."

"Where are the Christian prisoners? Have my commands been obeyed?"

"Yes, master, not a hair of their heads has been

touched; but the believers grumbled at showing them mercy and demanded their deaths, especially in the case of one, a French captain."

"What does a man's death signify—the drops of blood are lost in the sands, and their trails lost forever. Go tell the brothers that before the moon has reached its twentieth course, I shall be in their midst, and blood will flow in streams! Go!"

With an imperious wave of the hand Maldar pointed toward the horizon, and the Mekkadem prostrated himself anew.

"Yes," said Maldar to himself when the saint had gone, "they shall all die, and the stream of their blood will be the spring out of which Allah's warriors shall drink courage."

CHAPTER LI

UARGLA

LOST in the immensity of the desert, Uargla, the queen of the oases, was, up to thirty years ago, little known. On the day Maldar had conversed with the saint a dense mass of people crowded about one of the chief gates of Uargla, and loud voices arose in the air. A horrible monster, all tattered and torn, had swung himself on a pile of stones, and begun to harangue the crowd.

"You think you are acting wisely," he cried, "and yet you are only fools. In the prisons of Kiobeh you keep the enemies of Islam, and while you are pondering over the mysteries of the Koran, the infidel dogs are murdering your wives and children. Arise, believers of Islam, and kill the Giaours!"

The crowd yelled like savages.

For more than six months prisoners had been kept in the fortress, and in spite of all the protestations of the inhabitants, their lives had been spared. It was time, many thought, to kill them and expose their heads to the birds of prey. The marabout was right, they said, and the crowd demanded the lives of the unfortunates. The marabout was delighted at the effect of his words,

and uttering a cry he sprang from his perch and disappeared in the crowd. He knew the excited fanatics would follow him to the Kiobeh, and while he was walking on he pictured to himself the agonies the victims would have to endure. They must all die for the glory of Allah. In their blind hatred of the Christians, the Aratins, whose deep black color is not found in any other tribe, allied themselves with the Arabs, the Soudanese with the Mozambites, and yelling and shouting and armed with knives, guns and daggers, the savages marched toward the Kiobeh. Woe to the unfortunates who fell victims to such blind fanaticism—woe to the prisoners who were pining away in the Kiobeh!

CHAPTER LII

CAPTAIN JOLIETTE

TWENTY feet under the Kiobeh were the cells hewn out of the rock. In one of the darkest of these dungeons lay a young man with a ball and chain around his ankles. Rags covered the emaciated form of the man, and only from small strips of the rotten and withered clothing could it be seen that he wore the uniform of a French soldier. From the left shoulder part of an epaulet hung, and a scabbard without any sword in it was tied around his waist.

A dark form appeared in the doorway, shoved some food toward the prisoner, and disappeared without saying a word.

Ten years before the prisoner was the bearer of a proud name. Young, rich and courted, Albert de Morcerf was the lion of the Parisian salons and the joy of his parents. One day a crash came like lightning from a clear sky, and destoyed his whole existence. His father was denounced in the Chamber of Peers as a traitor and an assassin. Count de Morcerf could not defend himself, for what he was charged with was the truth. The Countess of Morcerf buried herself at Marseilles under the name of Madame Joliette, while her son entered the

army of Algeria or Chasseurs d'Afrique. In three years Albert Joliette had become a captain. As he lay now in his cell the past rose before him. He recollected his insult and challenge to the Count of Monte-Cristo, and his subsequent apology when he had heard Mercedes' story. That day on coming home he discovered his father dead with a bullet in his brain, inflicted by his own hand.

But now the past had been atoned for. The bravery of the son expiated the old father's crimes. When Albert returned home, Mercedes enjoyed new life at his side. But alas! The proud hopes soon vanished. All news from Albert ceased, and at the end of three months Mercedes, in despair, had written to the Count of Monte-Cristo.

Three months before Albert had been captured by the rebels, and incarcerated in the dungeon in which he still was. Not a human voice was ever heard. The black slave who served him with coffee could not be induced to say a word to him. Mercedes had told him the story of the Count of Monte-Cristo; he knew that Edmond Dantes had spent fourteen years in the Chateau d'If, and trembled when he thought of it. Yet if he were only able to escape! But Albert soon became convinced that this was impossible. There was no way out of these gloomy walls. He then made up his mind to starve himself, and for several days he had eaten nothing, so that he was astonished at finding himself still alive. When the slave withdrew on this particular day, Albert felt his head turn and he muttered half aloud:

"Mother, mother, forgive me, but I cannot do otherwise."

At this moment a loud noise was heard, and the assassins led by the marabout entered Joliette's dungeon.

He resolved to die bravely as became a French soldier.

Heavy blows were rained against his cell, and at the same moment Joliette heard a voice call to him:

"Captain, captain! Do not despair—help is at hand!"

Just then his cell door was burst open and the murderers rushed in.

CHAPTER LIII

THE LION IN CONFLICT WITH THE LION

WE MUST go back with our story four days. Sixty leagues from Uargla an immense caravan was encamped. Not a tree or a green leaf could be seen for miles around, and yet it was here that Monte-Cristo cast his tent. Hardly had he arrived at Bona than he regained the vigor of his youthful days, and two hours after his landing Monte-Cristo was already on his way to the desert with a well-organized caravan. One hundred energetic men accompanied him, and his train consisted of two hundred horses and eight hundred camels. He and Spero were at the head of the party; Bertuccio, Jacopo and Coucou followed behind. Before he had left the ship, the count had called his son aside, and putting a map before him, he pointed with his finger to Uargla and said:

"This is the place we must go to—in Uargla we shall find what we are looking for."

Monte-Cristo knew that in the centre of the desert the queen of the oases, Uargla, lay, and that it was the principal refuge of sedition. He had known that Abd-el-Kader's imprisonment was but the commencement of a long and bloody war. The name given him by the

Zouave, Mohammed ben Abdallah, he knew to be that of a treacherous villain. How did it happen, then, that Monte-Cristo had not recognized in the Arab who enjoyed his hospitality Mohammed ben Abdallah? The count had been rewarded for his generosity by having his cabin broken open, the contents of his safe scattered about, and being told to beware of the Khouans.

What the Fenians are to Ireland, the Thugs to India, the Khouans are to Arabia. They formed a brotherhood whose object was the murder and annihilation of all Europeans and Christians. Monte-Cristo knew the savage nature of these enemies. He was now within four days' journey of Uargla, and began to hope that perhaps he would find what he was seeking. When night came, Monte-Cristo withdrew with Spero to his tent. The count wrote to Haydee. A courier went north every day, but Monte-Cristo had not yet been able to send Mercedes any consolation. Spero, tired out by the fatigues of the day, had fallen asleep, and the father often gazed with pleasure at the finely chiselled face. How many dreams and hopes rested on this son! Yes, when he gazed at Spero, he had to confess that he had dealt too harshly with Morcerf. If he had been a father at that time, he would have hesitated before he had carried out his plan of vengeance. Ah! he must hurry and bring back to Mercedes her son, so that the punishment should not fall on Spero's head.

Suddenly Spero uttered a cry in his sleep, and looked wildly about him.

"No, no; let me go! Papa, help—they are carrying me away—help me!"

Monte-Cristo, frightened, bent over the sleeping boy.

"What is the matter, Spero?" he asked, tenderly; "have you been dreaming?"

"Oh, how glad I am it was only a dream! I will tell it to you."

"Speak, Spero, I am listening. You know," he consolingly added, "dreams are untrue."

"Yes, you have often told me that, and yet—"

The child paused and looked timidly in the corner of the tent.

"Why do you look so timidly over there?" asked the count, anxiously.

"Papa, do not laugh at me," whispered Spero, "but I do not think I was asleep. A little while ago, I saw the curtains of the tent part and a dark form appeared at the aperture."

"When was it, Spero?"

"At the moment when you laid the pen down and came to me."

"You saw me then? You were not sleeping?"

"I do not know, papa; I have read of the eye of the serpent, which frightens the little birds and prevents them from making a single movement. I could not move, and the two men drew near me. They pressed their long hands upon my forehead and wished to drag me off. Then finally I screamed and they disappeared."

Monte-Cristo embraced the excited child and reassuringly murmured:

"Keep quiet, Spero, I am with you."

Monte-Cristo looked thoughtful. Suppose his boy should be taken from him? No, it was nonsense. Spero must have been dreaming.

"Spero," he said, turning to the child, "I shall watch

over your slumbers! Lie down again and have no fear. Come, I will kiss you; think of your mother and go to sleep."

The boy smiled now and his pale cheeks grew rosy. His father's voice gave him courage, and, laying his head upon Monte-Cristo's shoulder, he fell asleep, murmuring: "Dear, dear mother."

When he was fast asleep, Monte-Cristo gently withdrew his arm and softly walked to the corner of the tent. The cloth of which the tent was made was very strong and thick, and withstood the rays of the sun and the rain. When the count let his hand glide over it, he almost uttered a cry of astonishment. Spero had not been dreaming! The tent had been cut from top to bottom as if with a sharp sword.

Who had any interest in breaking into his tent? Did they wish to kill him or Spero?

The count turned deadly pale. He had tried to reassure Spero by telling him that dreams were untruths, but he himself felt disturbed. Throwing the curtains of the tent aside, Monte-Cristo went out into the night. The pale moonlight shone full upon the dark rocks. With the sharp glance of an eagle Monte-Cristo gazed about. It seemed hardly possible to him that two men had gone through the camp unhindered and undisturbed, and yet it was so. The cut in the canvas was the best proof of this. Shaking his head, the count returned to the tent and mended the tear in the cloth with fine wire thread. Thereupon he shoved the table near the wall and began to write. Spero could sleep peacefully; his father was watching. Haydee had intrusted the child to him, and he had to bring it back to her in safety. Sud-

denly he was aroused by the roar of a lion. The count seized a gun, flung his arm about Spero, whom he would not have left alone for the world, and hurried out. The Arabs, stricken with terror, had fled in all directions.

"Let no one stir!" shouted the count above the din. "I will answer for your life, but you must obey my orders."

"Here I am," said Coucou, coming forward. "Master, let me follow you. I know the lion and understand how to fight him."

"Master, take my life, but spare your own," implored Jacopo.

"Jacopo, Coucou," said the count, "I intrust Spero to you, and let no one fire until I do. The first shot belongs to me. If I should miss the lion, then you can take your turn."

A new uproar was heard, followed by the report of a gun.

"A man seems to have attacked the beast," said the count, running in the direction whence the sound proceeded.

To his horror he saw a man lying on the ground, and the lion standing over him with one paw on his breast. It was Bertuccio, Benedetto's foster-father. Carefully, fearlessly, looking into the yellow eye of the king of beasts, Monte-Cristo advanced. The lion growled. The slightest movement would have caused Bertuccio's death. With a bound it sprang at the count. Quick as thought the latter fired. With a roar of pain the majestic beast turned in the air and fell to the ground, dead. The next minute the count knelt at Bertuccio's side. The latter was unconscious. The count raised his pale face, and,

dashing some water over it, gradually restored the old man to his senses.

"Bertuccio," he softly said, "do you know me?"

"Yes, master. Ah, the lion has finished me! Its claws were buried like daggers in my breast."

"Have you nothing to say to me? Have you no wish to be carried out? Speak, you know I am your friend."

"Quick, quick!" he whispered, breathlessly; "one more—drop—Spero—you—"

"Drink!" said the count, placing a bottle to his lips.

"Master, beware of your enemies. I saw them, I followed them, and then I met the lion."

"Enemies, you say? How many were there?"

"Two. They were Arabs. Ajassuas, as I believe. Oh, beware of them!"

"Bertuccio, since twenty years you have been a faithful friend to me. Speak, and I swear on my honor I will do what you say."

"My dear master—it is—about—that wretch."

"You speak of Benedetto?"

"Yes. I would have killed him then if you had not held me back, but yet I am glad I did not do it. I ask you as a favor to—"

"To what?"

"To let Benedetto live, if he should ever cross your path. He must not die by your hand."

"I swear not to kill him, Bertuccio; by the head of my child."

Bertuccio muttered his thanks, and passed silently away.

"The lion has conquered the lion," whispered a voice close to the count.

Monte-Cristo turned around and saw a delicate young girl in a white bernouse.

"Who are you?" he gently asked.

CHAPTER LIV

MEDJE

AT THE count's question, the girl passed her small white hand slowly across her forehead, and in a low voice said:

"I am she who no longer has any family, for her family has been tortured; she has no native country, for it has exiled her; no friend, for her only one is in the power of his enemies."

"Then your name is Medje?" exclaimed the count in a sudden fit of joyful inspiration.

"Yes, I am Medje," she proudly answered, throwing back her veil and revealing a countenance of superb beauty.

Coucou now hastened up, and as he beheld the young Arabian, he excitedly exclaimed:

"Medje, commander, it is Medje. Ask her where her 'little papa' is."

Medje turned deathly pale as she heard these words.

She stretched her arms toward the south and mournfully said:

"Little papa is down there, in the sultana's dungeon."

"Do you mean Captain Joliette, whom you call little papa?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"Yes."

"And the sultana is Uargla, the mysterious city?"

The young girl shivered as she replied:

"Yes, Uargla. There he suffers and there, too, he will be killed."

Monte-Cristo waved back those around, and then asked her in a whisper:

"Why did you come here?"

"To look for you."

"For me? Do you know me?"

"No."

"Somebody has told you my name?"

"No."

"Explain yourself more plainly."

"I will tell you everything, but let these men go away."

"Follow me," said the count.

The count ordered Coucou to take charge of the dead lion, and of Bertuccio's body, which would be buried in the morning. He then gazed intently at the girl, and recognized two pale six-cornered stars in dead gold color on her cheeks. This filled him with new hope.

"Poor Bertuccio," sighed the Jackal, "he was a good comrade."

"And a faithful soul," added Monte-Cristo.

Spero came running up, and winding his arm around his father's neck, whisperingly asked:

"Papa, why could I not accompany you?"

"My child, it was a fight with a lion."

"You were not afraid? Why should I have been?"

The handsome boy now, for the first time, perceived Medje, who smiled at him.

"Who is that, papa?" he asked in a whisper.

"A friend, Spero; offer her your hand."

The boy obeyed and Medje raised his hand to her lips, murmuring:

"Son of him who kills lions, may God measure your years by the kisses which your father gives you."

Monte-Cristo clasped his arms around Spero's shoulders and, accompanied by him and Medje, approached the tent. But before he reached it an Arab excitedly ran toward him with outstretched arms.

"Oh, master, hear me. Do not let this woman cross the threshold of the camp."

"Why not?"

"Did you not see the sign on her cheek? She is accursed."

Involuntarily Medje covered her face with her hands.

Monte-Cristo angrily retorted:

"Silence. The weaker have a right to the hospitality of the stronger.

"Oh, my lord. Heed my warning. She is a witch, an accursed fortune-teller. You will be sorry if she enters the camp. She will cast a spell over camels and men."

"All the same, leave me. Medje has placed herself under my protection and I will not deceive her confidence."

The Arabian girl clung weeping to the count.

"Do not grieve," he said, "you have mentioned a name which renders you holy in my eyes."

He then turned to the Arab, and sternly continued:

"You may have your liberty if you desire. But if you have not only spoken in your own name but also in that of your comrades, tell them that Monte-Cristo, the lion-tamer, is afraid of nobody. They may all leave. The desert with its terrors cannot alter my will."

The other Arabs, who had drawn near, heard these words, and enthusiastically exclaimed:

"We will not leave you, lion-killer."

The count nodded and, addressing the Corsican, said:

"Give him double what he claims. In my home no attention is paid to magic; we honor God and laugh at demons."

He slowly entered his tent, and gazing at Spero and Medje, in a friendly tone of voice said:

"Do not be afraid, I am protecting you. Draw nearer, Medje, and answer my questions."

The young girl bowed low in token of obedience, and the count began:

"So you know Captain Joliette?"

"Yes, he saved my life, and thereby became my lord and master."

"You know who has captured him?"

"Yes, they are the enemies of my race as they are of yours. They are called the Ajassuas and fear nothing and nobody—oh, they are the emissaries from the regions below!"

"Are they masters of Uargla?"

"Yes."

"And you assert that Captain Joliette is still alive?"

"Yes, he still lives, I swear it; but he is suffering untold tortures in a damp, dark, subterranean dungeon. Oh, would I could suffer his anguish and terrors for him; he has saved me, and now that he should miserably die!"

Hot tears ran over Medje's brown cheeks, and her small hands were clasped convulsively. Monte-Cristo watched her narrowly, and Coucou's tale that the Ara-

bian girl had disappeared almost at the same time as the captain again came into his mind.

"You love Captain Joliette?" he asked.

"Does not the weak child love its father who guides its tottering footsteps? Yes, I love him whose name you have mentioned. He is the strong trunk which gives support to the clinging vine."

"And why do the Arabs refuse to permit you to remain in camp? Your cheeks bear the sign of an accursed caste, the brand of the murderous Khouans."

Medje's face became fiery red.

"Hear me," she said, "before you condemn me. You will be just to me not only on account of your brother but also for the sake of this child."

She pointed to Spero, who had again fallen asleep, and Monte-Cristo, frightened in spite of himself, said:

"Speak. I will not interrupt you again."

"My father," began Medje hastily, "was a mighty Kabyle chief. He was a wise man and his tribe was industrious and prosperous.

"Then came the day when your countrymen, the French, set foot on our sacred shores. My father summoned his tribe to arms, and took part in the battle against the invaders. During a bitter fight between the Europeans and the Arabs a traitor showed the enemy a secret path through the defile, and, taken by surprise, my father saw himself surrounded by the enemy. Our troops had been so decimated by the murderous fire that scarcely more than a hundred remained. A marabout who was in the camp induced them to seek refuge in a cave, and hardly had my father entered it with his troops when the treacherous marabout betrayed his

hiding-place to the enemy. They stationed themselves before the opening and fired in on the helpless Arabs, who were caught like rats in a hole.

"In less than half an hour only half of the number were still surviving, and the French called upon them to surrender. My father, all bleeding from his wounds, had an interview with the French general, in which he offered his own life and pledged that none of the tribe of Ben-Ali-Smah would ever again take up arms against the French. This he did on condition that his men were to be let go free. The general accepted the offer and my father took the solemn pledge; then he bared his bosom to be shot.

"But the Frenchman was a noble man, and, taking my father's hand, said that France sought friends and allies in Africa, not slaves. He did not want his life, but his friendship. We lived very happy and peaceful after that, only we were called renegades by the other tribes, and especially the Khouans, that murderous class which believes that it pleases Allah if they shed their fellow beings' blood.

"Five years had elapsed, and I was then twelve years old, when my father gave a great feast in honor of a celebrated French commander who visited our settlement. Suddenly, at midnight, when the festivities were over, and we were all lying in a deep sleep, the Khouans made an attack on our village. My father was assassinated and my mother and I taken prisoners. We were carried into the desert with other prisoners of my tribe. Reaching an oasis, the captives were tied to the trunks of trees, and their limbs hacked off by the murderous Khouans with their yataghans. My mother was one of those tortured

to death in this way. Her last words were: 'Medje, avenge us, and remember your father's oath.' I swooned as she died. I was recalled to life by sharp pain on my cheeks. With a shriek I opened my eyes, and saw standing before me a man holding a white-hot iron in his hand, with which he had just branded me.

"'By Allah,' he exclaimed, 'I forbid you to touch this maiden; she carries the sacred sign.'

"All stepped reverently back, and while the terrible pain forced the hot tears out of my eyes they fell on their knees before me and murmured unintelligible words. The man who had saved me was a powerful sheik of the Khouans. I did not then understand the motive of his action. Some old women took me in charge, and I was conveyed still further into the desert. From time to time I fell into a semi-comatose condition, and while my limbs became convulsed I uttered incoherent words, which the old women proclaimed to be prophecies. Much later I discovered that they had put me in this terrible condition by means of opiates. That is how they wanted to make me a Khouan priestess.

"Finally, when I was sixteen years of age, the sheik who had saved my life wanted to make me his wife. He was my father's and mother's assassin, and I hated him. To escape his odious addresses, I plunged a dagger in my breast. I would rather die than belong to him. For weeks I lay between life and death, and when I recovered I determined to flee. A midnight attack on the Ajassuas tribe, as the Khouan caste was termed, gave me the opportunity. I made good my escape, and wandered on and on until I sank senseless from exhaustion on the ground.

"When I recovered my senses I found myself in an oasis near a rippling brook, the clear, cool water of which slaked my thirst, and the fruit of a date-tree stilled my hunger. Guiding myself by the stars I took a northern direction, hoping to find some Frenchman who had been my father's friend. Suddenly, however, I saw a panther's eye gleaming at me from the bushes. I wanted to cry for help, but I could not. The next minute I felt the sharp claws of the wild beast on my back and with a groan sank to the ground.

"I awoke under the kind care of a man who was binding the wound on my shoulder. That man who had saved me from the panther's clutches was Captain Joliette. Days of ineffable bliss followed. The captain took me into his French camp and surrounded me with every care and attention. I called him my 'little papa.' Oh, how I love him! I could place my hands under his feet. He became my teacher, and I soon learned to speak his language. The other soldiers were also kind to me and especially Coucou, who has now recognized me again. The days I spent in the French camp were as if spent in paradise. But alas, misfortune soon threw its black shadow over me.

"One night I awoke in my tent on account of a strange noise. For an instant I saw the black face and gleaming eyes of an Ajassua, then they disappeared and I discovered that the canvas of my tent had been slit from top to bottom with a keen dagger."

As Medje related this incident Monte-Cristo could not repress a slight shudder. Had not Spero had the same experience, and was not the canvas of his tent slit in the same manner? What if the same danger threatened him?

"I could not sleep any more," continued Medje, "and as soon as day came I hastened to the captain's tent. He was on the point of starting out on an expedition with twenty men. I begged him on my knees not to leave me alone behind, but he only laughed at my fears, kissed me on the forehead, and rode off at the head of his small detachment.

"The day seemed to me interminable. When night came and the captain did not return I became terribly anxious. I rushed to the outer posts and gazed fixedly down the roadway. Suddenly I felt myself thrown to the ground, a gag forced in my mouth, my hands and feet were bound with silken cords, and then powerful hands lifted me up on the back of a horse which dashed off at headlong speed.

"How long the mad ride lasted I cannot tell. Finally the gag was taken from my mouth, and through the folds of my veil I recognized the sheik of the Ajassuas, who was bending over me.

"'This time you shall not escape from me,' he declared, and the ride was continued for three days and three nights before we came to a final halt.

"I found myself in Uargla, that terrible city in whose streets blood flows in streams. I was brought into a solid tower of Kiobeh, and the fearful attendants, who saw in me a priestess of Allah, again surrounded me.

"At first I refused all food, wishing to starve to death, but I laid aside this idea, as I had a presentiment that I would still be of some service to my friend. Two days later I heard a terrible noise in the street, and hastening to the grated window of my cell, gazed out.

"I saw a sight which froze my blood with horror.

Dark forms clad in long brown cloaks carried a bier made of twigs of trees, and on it, pale, bleeding, and with closed eyes, lay my protector, Captain Joliette.

"I shook my prison bars; I wanted to get out and die with my friend. In vain; the grating did not shake or give way. At this instant I felt myself pulled back, and the man who had dared to make love to me stood before me.

" 'Medje,' he said, 'the Frenchman who stole you is in our hands.'

" 'And you will kill him, coward,' I cried.

" 'No, not yet,' he replied with a smile; 'look!'

"I did so, and saw the captain carried on the bier through the low iron gate.

" 'They will put this Christian, as you call him, in a dark cell and keep him there month after month until he longs for death.'

" 'And what will you do with me?' I asked.

" 'Keep you for myself.'

"I then made an infamous bargain; God forgive me for doing so. I told him I would be his if he would set the captain at liberty. He hesitated at first, but finally accepted. I made him take a solemn oath, and he, in turn, obliged me to do the same.

" 'Leave me,' I then said, 'and when you have fulfilled your word, return.'

"He went, and I stood at the window hour after hour. The fatal door did not open. On the fourth day I learned the reason. An order had been issued prohibiting the setting at liberty of any prisoner, and the man to whom I had sworn the oath had quarrelled with the others on account of the order, and had been killed. My hope

to serve my friend was blasted. A strange rumor next reached me that a marabout was preaching immediate massacre, and I knew not whether Captain Joliette was alive or dead. I could now walk about Uargla where I pleased, and I determined one evening to wrap myself in my veil and take advantage of the strange superstition in which I was still held. The sentinel trembled when he saw me. I approached him and said some strange words which came into my head. He threw down his weapons and fled. I passed out of Uargla and strayed into the desert. Allah has guided my footsteps to you. You will save him, I feel it, I know it."

"May Heaven grant your wishes!" said Monte-Cristo, as, leaving the tent, he summoned Jacopo and ordered him to get ready to depart at once.

"Hurrah! we're off at last!" cried Coucou, throwing his cap in the air.

At this instant a discharge of musketry was heard. Monte-Cristo hastened in the direction of the sound, followed by Coucou and about fifty men. The camp appeared to be surrounded, yet, at a shrill cry, which seemed to be a signal, the horsemen suddenly wheeled about and dashed away.

What did it mean? A sudden thought darted through Monte-Cristo's brain. He rushed back to his tent. The couch was empty—Spero was not there! The terrible truth burst on his mind. The attack had been only feigned. The bandits had stolen his boy!

The strong man wept; but, as a hot tear fell on his hand, he shook his head like a lion aroused from his sleep, and shouted:

"To horse! To horse! To Uargla!"

CHAPTER LV

"DO NOT DIE, CAPTAIN!"

WE LEFT Captain Joliette at the moment when the savages commanded by the marabout entered his cell, and a voice had called to him:

"Do not die, captain!"

"Kill him! kill him!" shouted the crowd.

The marabout now advanced toward the captain, and, placing his lean hand on the prisoner's shoulder, said:

"There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet!"

The effect of these words on the populace was most magical. They all fell back and opened a space for the approach of a motley group of horsemen.

"The Khouans! the Khouans!" was whispered from one to the other.

They all crowded around and kissed the mantle of the chief.

"You are all cowardly murderers!" cried Albert. "Make an end of it."

"You want to die?" said the chief. "All right; but I warn you that your agonies will be terrible!"

Upon a wink from the chief the captain was tied to a post.

"Bring out the other prisoners!" commanded the Arab chieftain.

They were thirty in number, all French soldiers, and upon the direction of the chief they were led past the post to which Albert was tied.

"Long live our captain!" they cried, as they caught a glimpse of his uniform.

Tears started in Albert's eyes, and he loudly joined in the cry.

The rear of the procession was brought up by a strange-looking person. His walk betrayed the Parisian boulevardier, and the remnants of his clothing confirmed the opinion. When he passed the marabout he cried aloud in French:

"You old fool, you, what are you staring at? You don't want me to admire your ugly face, do you?"

The marabout, who did not understand French, looked at him in astonishment, while the soldiers burst out laughing.

The stranger looked sharply at Albert, and said:

"Captain, by all the saints, you must not die."

"What?" exclaimed Albert, surprised, "it was you who—"

"Yes, I, Gratillet, journalist, Beauchamp's friend and your friend," continued Gratillet. "Captain, we must escape out of this to-night; to-morrow it might be too late."

Albert was encouraged by the journalist's words, and began to hope. But just then a wild tumult arose; the Arabs, yataghans in hand, rushed upon the three nearest prisoners, and literally chopped them in pieces. Having tasted blood, they butchered right and left. Only a few prisoners still remained, and among them was the reporter.

Albert, in a daze, gazed at the massacre and the pools of blood which already threatened to reach his feet.

Gratillet now fell. No shot had struck him. Horror had no doubt put an end to the poor fellow's life.

Before Albert had time to realize the imminent danger of his situation, the scene changed as if by magic. The sheik and his subjects, followed by the marabout, took to their horses and suddenly disappeared. None of them thought of their principal victim, and the captain tried in vain to guess the riddle.

Darkness set in, and by the dying rays of the sun Albert saw a cavalcade coming up the road to Uargla. At the head of the procession rode a tall man, whose green turban denoted that the wearer had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, for only those who visit the Kaaba have the right to decorate themselves with the sacred emblem.

Who could this man be? Albert had never seen him, and yet the green turban appeared to him to be a sign of approaching rescue.

The man who wore this green turban was Maldar. He had been gone a year, and his return had been the signal for the revolt to break out. All the prisoners that were taken he had ordered to be confined until his return from Mecca. He was very angry when he heard that the prisoners had been massacred.

"Unfaithful, traitorous people!" he exclaimed at the mosque at Uargla. "Who told you to disobey my orders?"

The Khouans begged pitifully for mercy.

"Allah demands obedience," continued Maldar; "and now bring the young prisoner, who is waiting in front of the mosque, for the sentence."

The sheik departed, and soon returned with Spero, who was tightly bound. The lad was pale, but courage shone from his dark eyes.

"Come nearer," said Maldar, "and tell me your name."

"Why do you wish to know, and by what right?" asked Spero, folding his arms.

Maldar gnashed his teeth.

"By right of the strong, and with the right to punish you for the sins of your country. What is your name?"

"Spero."

"Spero means hope. Tell me now the name of your father?"

"My father is the Count of Monte-Cristo!"

"I know. Your father is one of those brainless fools who imagine every one must bend the knee to them. What rank does he occupy in your country?"

"He is a prince who governs the souls of men."

"Your father is rich—very rich?"

"What does that concern you?"

"You are brave, and your father must love you."

Spero did not answer, but his eyes sparkled when Maldar spoke his father's name.

"I will know how to strike your proud father; he shall grovel in the dust at my feet. I—"

He stopped short. A new idea seemed to have taken possession of him.

"All the prisoners are dead, are they not?" he asked, turning to a sheik.

"No, master, one still lives, a French officer."

"His name?"

"Captain Joliette."

In spite of his self-control, Spero gave a cry of astonishment, for he knew that it was to rescue the captain that Monte-Cristo had set out for Africa.

"Go," said Maldar, "bring the prisoner here."

The sheik left, and Maldar walked up and down with his big strides.

"Master!" cried the sheik, running in breathlessly.

"Well?"

"Captain Joliette is gone."

"Gone!" screamed Maldar in a rage. "Within one hour he must be brought back to the Kiobeh. If not you must answer with your head; and now bring the lad to the iron chamber, and see that he does not escape!"

CHAPTER LVI

THE FLIGHT

BY WHAT miracle had Albert escaped?

The reader will recollect that Gratillet had fallen into the sea of blood which had streamed from the wounds of the victims. As soon as the Khouans had gone a flock of vultures immediately encircled the scene of the massacre and began to hover about the dead bodies.

Albert was leaning with closed eyes against the post, when a well-known voice angrily cried:

"Captain, let us think now of our rescue."

It was Gratillet.

"Let me die," murmured Albert, wearily. "I do not care to live any more."

"You are talking nonsense. Die, forsooth! Shake off your torpor and be a man."

"Through what miracle did you recover your life?"

"None, I tell you. I never was dead; only shamming. Oh, if I only had a knife."

While Gratillet was talking he worked at Albert's cords with his teeth and nails, and finally succeeded in freeing him.

"And now," he said, "let's decamp, and that as soon as possible."

The two men were soon on the road, the journalist peering about and keeping up a lively conversation.

"Here is a narrow pathway!" exclaimed the reporter suddenly. "Captain, lie down on the ground near me, and we can continue our little walk on all-fours."

Albert followed the journalist's orders, and the next minute was lying on the ground near his companion.

"Well done," said Gratillet. "Now we must be very careful, for it is pitch dark and banisters are unknown in Uargla. Ah, now I know where the pathway comes from. It is a ditch which gets the rain from the rocks."

"Do you need a cord?" asked Albert. "If so, I have a scarf which answers the same purpose."

"Is it strong?"

"Best of wool and perfectly new."

"How long is it?"

"Four yards."

"Then give it to me."

Albert handed it to him and he bound it about his arms. This done, Gratillet swung himself over a precipice and began his dangerous journey.

"Flying is not so bad after all," said the reporter. "It is doing splendidly and I—"

The scarf broke and Gratillet fell to the bottom, carrying Albert along, who had held one end of it.

At the same moment the discharge of musketry was heard. Had they escaped from Scylla to fall into Charybdis?

CHAPTER LVII

AT THE FOOT OF THE KIOBEH

"FORWARD—to Uargla!" Monte-Cristo had exclaimed when he became aware of the loss of his son. Medje urged her horse close to that of the count; he noticed her, and a dark suspicion took possession of him.

"Go back, you traitress!" he angrily exclaimed. "You have delivered my son over to the Khouans."

A deadly pallor overspread Medje's fine features, and sobbing bitterly she let her head fall on the horse's neck.

"Oh, master!" she said, "why do you accuse me?"

"Pardon me, child," said Monte-Cristo gently; "sorrow for the loss of my dear son has made me crazy. Oh, if I could only find him again."

"Courage, dear master, courage! Our horses are as swift as the wind. You will conquer the Khouans. The lion-killer is invincible!"

After an exhausting ride of three long hours they beheld the minarets of Uargla. Monte-Cristo divided his men in two companies; one he commanded with Jacopo and Medje, the other he placed in charge of Coucou. Their muskets were loaded, and hardly had the count arranged his plan of attack, than the gates of Uargla were opened and a band of horsemen rode forward to

meet him. The Frenchmen allowed the Arabs to approach close to them and then fired their first salvo. A second one followed, and through the narrow streets the Count of Monte-Cristo and his men entered Uargla. A scene of indescribable confusion ensued. The Arabs fled in all directions.

In the meantime Coucou at the head of his little company had entered through the eastern door, and, having to avenge the murder of his friends, he struck blows to the right and left.

"This for Jacques! This for Pierre! This for Jean! Back, you brown devils!"

When Monte-Cristo had reached the foot of the Kiobeh, Medje said:

"It is here."

"Light the torches!" commanded Monte-Cristo.

It was done.

"In the name of Allah, the merciful and charitable God," exclaimed the count.

Three times he repeated the words. For a time all was silent. After a while the door of the fortress opened and Maldar appeared on the threshold.

"Who are you, who comes here as an enemy?"

"Let us not fight with words," replied Monte-Cristo. "It was your people who first attacked us."

"Blood has flowed," replied Maldar, coldly; "and it falls back upon your head."

"Your people have made prisoners; sneakingly surprised people at night and carried them away. What have you done with these prisoners?"

"They are dead."

"All?"

"All!"

"All dead?" exclaimed Monte-Cristo, trembling. "Woe to you, if you have spoken the truth."

"You are false servants of the prophet," cried Medje, "and Allah's eternal curse will rest upon you. Have you heard?" she added, turning to Monte-Cristo's companions; "the wretch says he has murdered all the prisoners."

"In the devil's name!" exclaimed Coucou. "He shall pay for that."

"You acknowledge that you were cowardly enough to murder defenceless men," said Monte-Cristo, after a pause, to Maldar; "have you been so base as to kill an innocent child?"

"Are you speaking of your own son?"

"Yes. Is my son dead?"

"Your son still lives," replied Maldar.

Monte-Cristo uttered a cry. His son lived and was behind these walls.

"You are Maldar. You have enjoyed my hospitality. What crime have I committed that you should punish me through my child?"

"The crime of your race! You are a son of France."

"You say I am a son of France. Have you not served that country too?"

"Only dissimulation. I waited for a favorable opportunity."

"What will you do with my son?"

"The decision depends on you."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Come with confidence to us," replied Maldar, ear-

nestly. "In the citadel I will discuss your son's ransom with you."

"Do not go, master," cried Coucou; "they are laying a trap for you."

Monte-Cristo strode, nevertheless, toward the door.

CHAPTER LVIII

MONTE-CRISTO BECOMES EDMOND DANTES

"MALDAR," the count cried aloud, "I am here."

The door was opened. Monte-Cristo went into a large courtyard. Maldar was waiting for him.

"Here I am," said the count. "You have called me about the ransom for my son. What is the sum you ask?"

"I did not say it should be money."

"Then take my life—anything you wish."

"What I want of you is neither gold nor your life. I know who you are, and the position you occupy in your country. Your countrymen have confidence in you, and I—"

"Go on—go on," urged Monte-Cristo.

"Have patience. Come here and write."

Maldar went toward a table upon which were writing materials, and, pressing a pen in Monte-Cristo's hand, he shoved a piece of paper toward him.

The count was silent, and seated himself at the table.

"I, the Count of Monte-Cristo," the Arabian began to dictate, "inform the Governor of Themcen that I am at Uargla, and have won the confidence of the Sultan

Maldar. More than one hundred French prisoners are in the Kiobeh. The Khouans are not numerous and do not anticipate an attack. The defile of Bab-el-Zhur is easy to reach and only poorly defended. A force of bold soldiers could secure possession of the city in an easy manner. Success is certain."

Monte-Cristo, without hesitation, had written the words down, and the Arabian, looking sharply at him, continued:

"Put your name under what you have just written—"

"One word more," interrupted the count. "I understand your aim. You want to lead a French detachment in ambush?"

"Yes. For the head of your son, I require those of a hundred Frenchmen."

"Spero," cried the count, "my darling boy, should I, your father, ensnare one hundred Frenchmen into an ambush? I have written the letter, the signature alone is missing; hear me, while I read it to you."

Monte-Cristo, in a trembling voice, read the letter.

"Spero, my son, choose between life and death. Shall I sign the letter?"

"You cannot hear his voice," said Maldar; "but wait a moment, and I will have him brought here."

He motioned with his hand. The door was thrown open, and the next minute Spero lay in his father's arms.

"Speak, Spero, what shall I do?"

The boy took the paper and tore it into pieces.

"Let them kill us," he said, firmly.

When Maldar heard these words, he gave a wild yell and sprang upon the boy.

"Wretched worm!" he hissed; "are you aware that I can break every bone in your body?"

Saying this, Maldar drew a long pistol from his belt and pointed it at the boy's face. Quick as thought Monte-Cristo seized the Arab by the throat, and threw him among the Khouans.

"Fire—fire!" shouted Maldar.

The men obeyed, but not a bullet entered the room.

"Put your arms about my neck, Spero," said the count, "and have no fear. Away with the Count of Monte-Cristo," he added in a vibrating voice; "Edmond Dantes, arise from out of the past, and help a father to rescue his son."

CHAPTER LIX

EDMOND DANTES

HE PLACED himself in a winding of the narrow stairs. Here no ball could reach him. A Khouan appeared, but the iron bar with which Monte-Cristo had armed himself descended on his head with terrific force. A second and third received the same reception. Maldar, wild with rage, continually screamed:

"Kill him, in the name of Allah!"

Monte-Cristo was struck by a ball, and a dagger was thrust in his foot. But he paid no attention to it. He dared not retreat if he wished to save Spero. His arm threatened to become lame, his powers were fast failing him, and he thought all was up with him. Suddenly he heard loud curses uttered in the French language. He recognized them as belonging to Coucou and Jacopo. Thank God! they had remembered him and effected an entrance.

"Count of Monte-Cristo!" came a loud voice through the night.

Not believing his ears, the count walked to the edge of the roof, and saw a sight which nearly caused him to lose his senses. At the foot of the tower a troop

of horsemen had gathered. The voice he had heard belonged to a woman, and by the light of the lightning he recognized Miss Clary Ellis, the young girl he had seen at Mercedes' house.

"Count of Monte-Cristo!" Clary exclaimed, in a clear, bright voice, "courage! Help is coming."

"Count of Monte-Cristo," came from another voice, "thanks, in the name of my mother."

Breathless, with his arm about Spero's neck, the count leaned against the wall, and he whom nothing surprised uttered an exclamation of astonishment when he looked down.

A man was climbing up the smooth wall. So interested were the count and Spero in the picture that they did not hear the stealthy steps behind them. Maldar was the man, and he had stretched forth his hands toward the boy. The count perceived him in the nick of time, and clutching him by the throat, threw him headlong down into the courtyard. The next minute the bold climber had jumped over the wall and anxiously cried:

"Count of Monte-Cristo, we must first rescue the child."

He took a long rope and bound it round Spero's waist. Then he let the boy gently over the parapet.

"Papa," came Spero's voice from below, "I am safe."

The stranger pulled the rope up anew, and said as he turned to the count:

"It is your turn now."

"But you?"

"Oh, never mind me; in case of necessity I will jump off. But be quick, we have no time to lose."

Monte-Cristo grasped the cord and was let down by the stranger. Looking up, he saw his rescuer sliding down the wall. As soon as he had touched the ground, the count went to him and, shaking him by the hand, said:

"You have saved my life, sir, and that of my son. Tell me your name, please, that I may know to whom I owe our rescue."

"I am a French colonist, count, and my name is Fanfaro."

Coucou and Albert now ran up to the count.

"The gentleman is evidently a monkey?" he asked the Zouave.

Fanfaro laughed.

Mademoiselle Clary now approached the count.

"How thankful I am," she said, "to have arrived so opportunely."

"And what brought you here?" asked the count.

"I swore to follow you," replied Clary, blushing, "but was delayed so many times, that I gave up all hope of rescuing your son. Fortunately I came across Monsieur Fanfaro. To him belongs the credit and—"

"And now, I thank God, the matter is over," interrupted Madame Caraman.

"And it was for me, count, that you incurred all these dangers?" asked Albert.

Monte-Cristo looked tenderly at the young man.

"I thank God I found you," he said, extending his arms to the young man.

"And now," Albert said, "let me present you to my other rescuer."

Gratillet advanced and, bowing gracefully, said:

"Count, excuse me, please, if my clothes are not exactly fashionable, but we have had no time to make our toilet."

Albert and the journalist, instead of having fallen down a precipice, had fallen into a lake. When Monte-Cristo heard Gratillet's name, he uttered a cry of surprise.

"Monsieur Gratillet," he said, "are you not a friend of Beauchamp?"

"Yes, his friend and reporter."

"But where is Jacopo?" asked the count, looking about for the Corsican.

"Jacopo is dead," said the Zouave; "a bullet shot him through the heart."

Monte-Cristo hurried with Coucou and Albert to the spot where Jacopo had fallen. Suddenly he struck his forehead.

"What has become of Medje?" he asked.

"Medje?" asked Albert.

"Yes, she brought us here, and—merciful Heaven! here she lies," the count exclaimed.

Medje was lying motionless on the ground, with a dagger wound in the shoulder.

"Poor Medje!" said Albert.

"Little father," whispered Medje when she had regained consciousness.

She stroked Albert's hand. Then her dark eyelashes closed over her eyes. Medje was dead.

CHAPTER LX

SECRETS

MONTE-CRISTO and Albert rode slowly near Fanfaro, while Coucou and Gratillet kept the ladies company. The Zouave spoke continually with Madame Caraman.

"Tell me," said Coucou, "how did you come to Africa?"

"Because my lady wished it."

"That is a bitter disappointment. I had imagined that it was on account of—"

"You—you stupid fool!"

"I will be good, Madame Caraman, if you will tell me how you came to Uargla."

"We followed the Count of Monte-Cristo."

"You are in love with him."

"We followed the count because we wished to aid him in rescuing Captain Joliette."

"But tell me about the Americans."

"They deserted us as soon as we reached the land. The Arabs had previously stolen our camels."

"Infamous race," growled Coucou.

"We were thus all alone in the desert. We suffered from hunger and thirst, and had we not fortunately reached

the oasis on the second day, we would probably lie now buried in the desert. At the oasis we made the acquaintance of Monsieur Fanfaro, a handsome man of forty."

"You noticed that," said the Zouave, ironically.

"Monsieur Fanfaro brought us to his farm, where his wife, a charming woman, received us. Between ourselves, I do not think Fanfaro has ever been a rope-dancer. His manners and features show he must be of good family, and I am tempted to call him a second Monte-Cristo."

This Fanfaro, as Madame Caraman had rightfully said, was a remarkably distinguished-looking gentleman. Monte-Cristo looked attentively at the colonist; he guessed that there was some mystery surrounding the man, and that something had caused him to seek a home in the desert. Finally they all reached the oasis, and Monte-Cristo breathed more freely. Three persons came to meet the travellers: a woman, who led a child by the hand, and a strangely formed creature which hopped about and looked more like a frog than a human being.

"What is that?" asked the count.

"Oh," replied Fanfaro, laughing, "that is Bobichel."

"Bobichel?"

"Yes, he was once a clown when I was an acrobat. He amuses my little son now, by imitating the frog."

Bobichel uttered a cry of joy as he saw the party approach.

"Thank God, master," he gleefully cried, "that you are home again. Caillette, Firejaws!" he cried aloud, "he is just returned!"

A woman and a giant hurried at Bobichel's call.

Fanfaro jumped from his horse, and embraced his wife and daughter.

"Irene, have a bed prepared. The child will be intrusted to your care."

Madame Caraman carried Spero into the house. Monte-Cristo examined the patient carefully, and breathed more lightly.

"A few days' rest will set him all right again," he said, turning to Fanfaro, "and if we can make use of your friendship—"

"Count, what I possess is yours. But let me introduce you to the colony," said Fanfaro.

Upon his call his wife appeared, a charming brunette about thirty years of age.

"Madame Fanfaro," said the colonist, "followed me to the desert."

"This is Firejaws, the king of athletes. And now it is the turn of Bobichel, the clown."

"It looks to me like a fairy tale," said the count. "Were you really a tight-rope walker and acrobat before?"

"Yes, count, and I am the only one of us who has given up the profession for good."

Monte-Cristo gazed interestedly at the speaker and his wife. Fanfaro, as we have before observed, was a fine-looking man, and Madame Irene looked like a marquise.

"Monsieur Fanfaro," said Monte-Cristo at table one day, "I do not know who you are, but I drink to your health and that of all the other members of the colony. May God always protect you and yours!"

"Oh, Monsieur Fanfaro," exclaimed Madame Caraman, "won't you tell us your history? I am curious to know it."

"What does Irene say to the proposition?" asked Fanfaro tenderly.

"Oh, I am satisfied," replied the handsome woman, laughing.

"Good, then I shall begin," said Fanfaro.

And while Spero slept Fanfaro began to relate the story of his life. As it is long, we shall narrate it in Part II. of "The Son of Monte-Cristo."

"THE SON OF MONTE-CRISTO" (END OF PART ONE)

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